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THE VICTORS

ROBERT BARR

1. Fiction, English

THE VICTORS

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"'I'LL TAKE THIS SHANTY JUST AS SHE STANDS,' SAID THE BOSS."—*Page 540.*

THE VICTORS

A ROMANCE OF YESTERDAY MORNING & THIS AFTERNOON

By ROBERT BARR

AUTHOR OF "IN THE MIDST OF ALARMS," "TEKLA," "A WOMAN INTERVENES," ETC.

To the Victors belong the spoils. —WILLIAM L. MARCY

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AN EFFORT AT DEDICATION

THE Great American Novel, so frequently referred to by the Press, will be looked for in vain. It never can be written, because America is so vast, its interests are so various, its activities so far-reaching, that even Honoré de Balzac, with all his forty or sixty volumes, could have done little more than draw the outlines of such a civilisation, had he been born a citizen of the United States instead of a citizen of France. The present volume, then, is merely a slight sketch of certain incidents that have come within range of my own limited observation and experience. It has been written and revised during the past five years, on the island of Manhattan in Eastern America, the island of England in Western Europe, the island of Capri in Southern Italy and the island of Islay in the Highlands of Scotland. Working on these islands, I have attempted to depict, in a measure, certain affairs that are supposed to interest a continent, aspiring to be the accurate reporter which early newspaper discipline exacted, rather than the imaginative novelist, so deservedly popular in our day.

Whatever difference of opinion may exist regarding various American institutions, the world at large must admire the educational system of the United States. The three master steps of learning, Public School, High School, and University, may be mounted by any energetic youth, and no toll-gate bars his way. The only tribute expected from him is diligence and good conduct.

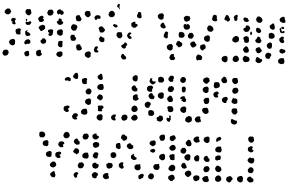
It is my ambition to associate this book with the name of the University of Michigan, near whose home the story's action begins. I must add in fairness to the University that such Hitching of my waggon to a Star is en-

tirely unauthorised. I do not know whether the permission I require may be granted by the President, or the Regents, or the Professors, or the students assembled in mass meeting on the campus, so I adopt the advice Pooh Bah gave to Ko-ko, and "chance it."

The driver of a vehicle frequently applies a whip-lash to the impudent small boy who attaches a home-made waggonette to the rear axle, and if the University repudiates this volume, my voice will be loudest in the chorus of condemnation. I shall follow the example of Charles Lamb, who assisted in hissing his own farce off the Drury Lane stage.

Any duly authorised protest will result in the withdrawal of this inscription from future editions, but, so far as the first issue is concerned, "The Victors" is dedicated to the University of Michigan, which has scattered many learned men over the world, some of whom I am privileged to number among my dearest friends.

ROBERT BARR.



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THE VICTORS

BOOK I

CLEARING FOR ACTION

CHAPTER I

"EACH NEW-HATCHED, UNFLEDGED COMRADE"

IT had been a panting hot day; a day when those who could sought shelter of shade, while those compelled to work stopped often and shook the dripping perspiration from their brows. The heat seemed to hang quivering in the air, abating, yet not appearing to abate; Mithras, god of light, the cause of it all, burned red in the west, and, like an impressionist painter recklessly lavish with his colours, had prodigally splashed all the far horizon with gold and crimson, while as the sun sank still lower behind a radiant cloud its rays were flung into the sky like the spokes of a gigantic wheel of glory; or if the sex of the simile be changed and Mithras be transformed into a goddess, this deity of the day coquettishly prepared to leave the scene of her triumphs, flirting open a fan of dazzling gossamer before making the farewell bow and quitting for the night her throne in the heavens.

Two very young men lay prone on their backs in a fence corner. The grass under them was parched, dry and warm, providing a comfortable couch. Straw hats with broad brims somewhat ragged at the rim concealed the two faces, but the buzzing flies bothered the boys, who sometimes struck out wildly at them, like men warding off danger in drowsiness. If a blow of this kind removed the hat, its owner groped

for it dreamily and drew it over his face again. At last the elder of the two rose to a sitting posture, letting his hat slide to the ground, and passed his shirt sleeve across his bedewed brow, drawing a deep breath as he did so. His was a clean-cut face, beaming with intelligence and glorified with a latent touch of enthusiasm. A young man with such a face might become anything—a revivalist preacher whose throbbing words would sweep thousands toward repentance; a statesman holding empire in his hands; a college professor moulding the untrained ambitions of young men; a politician, perhaps; a speculator, maybe; but whatever sphere of activity the future reserved for him, he would be an enthusiast always, ever believing fervently in himself and his cause, and yet a dreamer too—there lay a danger to his success—a dreamer and a theorist, who might not be able, with the alchemy of practicality, to transmute the abstract into the real. No lines marked or marred his smooth face; it was as yet an unwritten page; but there glowed from it the steady white light of promise, like the effect of a lamp behind a frosted pane.

"Jim, you lazy beggar, get up and look at this sunset."

Jim, his fingers interlaced behind the back of his head, did not move, but drowsily murmured:

"What's a-matter with it?" the words coming sleepily from under the tattered brim of the straw hat.

"Matter with it? Nothing, except that it's simply glorious; looks like a glimpse of the gates of heaven."

Jim disentangled his fingers, stretched his arms as far as they would go, and yawned wearily; then, still gaping prodigiously at the risk of a broken jaw, arose slowly.

"Fine open countenance, Jim," said his comrade, which remark, being an old and well-worn phrase, Jim ignored, glanced at the sunset and said:

"It's going to be another hot day to-morrow."

Jim's eyes speedily fell from the glowing sunset to the earth, and now, in spite of the heat, some energy in-

fused itself throughout his lanky frame. He saw part way down the hill, at the side of the road by which they sat, a scraggy little horse, attached to a dilapidated, four-wheeled light waggon.

"Back there, you fool!" cried Jim, jumping to his feet. "Where d'ye think you're a-going, anyhow? Want to get down the hill again? Thunder, you made fuss enough coming up."

The young man ran down the hill, took the patient, unresisting pony by the bridle, made it describe a semicircle at some risk of upsetting the waggon, led the animal up the hill past where the enthusiast still sat admiring the sunset, then giving the horse a hearty slap on the flank left it facing the east to crop the side-road grass again.

"Say, Ben, this horse is just like you; it hasn't enough sense to pound sand. Think of its not knowing any better than to go fooling down that hill again!"

"I tell you what I'd like to see," said Ben, as Jim seated himself once more on the side of the ditch. "I'd like to see a real Italian sunset. One of them must be worth a voyage across the Atlantic."

"Well, I've seen Italian labourers, and in seeing them I've had all I want of Italy. What I'd like to see is a way of earning my living. This here peddling's no good, Ben. There's no money in it; too many in the business. We're not ruined by Chinese cheap labour, as that Western fellow said, but we might as well be. There's enough of American cheap labour to knock us out."

"Do you know, Jim, I think where we have made our mistake in life is through going in for little things instead of big. It is just as easy to go in for a big thing as for a small one."

"Meaning profits, do you?"

"Meaning everything. I wish I had gone to that university. It wouldn't have cost any more than Stormboro Academy; for, after all, the main charge at college is the living expenses, and we could have lived as cheaply here as there. Then when we were through

we should have had something at the back of us. The University of Michigan means something; Stormboro Academy means nothing ten miles from that town. That's where I think we made the initial mistake, and that's what I was referring to when I said that if you're going for a thing go for the biggest of the kind that's to be had."

Ben spoke with the discouraged air of a disappointed man of twenty-one, who realises when it is too late the criminal waste of years that have gone before, and fears that his life is wrecked because of mistakes past remedy. The silence of the other showed that he too, shared the gloomy forebodings of his comrade. He gazed down over the fair town toward the sunset, his brow vexed with the ruffling of passing thought, as a placid lake is rippled by a sudden current of wind. The grim pessimism of youth overshadowed the two lads, and the possibilities of the future were as effectually hidden from them as was the beauty of the scene which lay before their eyes. Ben had wished himself in Italy, too ignorant to know that, spread out before him like a banquet of vision, was as fair a landscape as Italy could show, while the sunset was a display of chromatic celestial fire, such as could be seen in no country but America, outvieing in lavish splendour the more famous, but not more gorgeous, sunsets of the Orient. The physical eye of the young man saw the picture, but his mental eye beheld the sunset of his imagination, and he sighed for Italy.

In the immediate foreground lay embowered amidst vivid green a town whose loveliness, with its polychromatic background, seemed more like an exaggerated theatre-spectacle than a specimen of quiet country scenery. The broad carmine disk of the setting sun was sharply cut by the great dome of the university buildings, giving the effect of a shapely cameo environed with crimson. From the tall square pile supporting the lofty dome, which bore a striking resemblance to St. Peter's, in Rome, projected, on either side, the college wings, giving to the whole edifice a stately and dignified

appearance. Various departments of scholarly activity were housed in structures that formed a cluster round the domed rotunda, scattered here and there with little regard to symmetrical arrangement. From this educational core the town radiated in all directions, every avenue double-lined with trees, roofs peeping above the sea of foliage which circled the whitish college houses as the green periphery of Damascus surrounds the snowlike minarets of that ancient capital. The silver ribbon of a river ran past the town, and as far as the eye could see lay a rolling country, smiling like a garden. Such is the city of Ann Arbor, the home of the state University of Michigan.

" After all, Ben, the main thing is the learning; it doesn't so much matter where you get it. Six times seven is exactly forty-two in the university as it is in the academy. It isn't where you come from, but what you can do, now that you've left there; that's the way I look at it."

" Do you mean to hold that a diploma from Yale is no better than a certificate from Stormboro? " asked Ben.

" I don'no. Let's go and test it. I'm getting hungry, and we haven't made enough money to-day to buy one square meal. Let's whip up old Trigonitus here and journey to the farmhouse. I'll tell 'em you're a Yale man and that I'm from Stormboro, and we'll find out whether you fare better than I do."

" Oh, now you're talking nonsense, and you know it. Here's what confronts us. We've spent four years at Stormboro Academy, and we've been graduated, which means, I take it, that we have learned all they can teach us. The certificate we have received is a sort of receipt for four years' time duly paid to the school. We have the receipt and the knowledge, the question is what are we going to do with it."

" Which? The receipt or the knowledge? "

Ben ignored this flippant question, and the other after shouting at the horse, which showed an inclination to wander again, went on.

"That pony also seems to regret he was not allowed to go to Ann Arbor college, probably having yearnings to come out as the educated horse in a circus. Well, Ben, what's on your mind? Out with it. Got another scheme?"

"I've got a hundred of them."

"Yes, I know, but I want only one, and I'd like that one to be workable. Four weeks ago, according to you, there was a fortune in peddling. A fortune? Yes, and ever so much besides. We would travel round the world and see things."

"And don't we?"

"Yes. We were to accumulate health and strength in the glorious open air after our confinement in stuffy college rooms."

"Well, don't we?"

"After having filled ourselves full of theoretical knowledge we were to add practical information direct from the people."

"Don't we?"

"Yes, we get the opinions of farmers on the great tramp question when we ask for something to eat, but their opinions have a certain monotony; they are all in agreement that the dogs should be set on us. Then we were to make fifty per cent. on everything we sold, and the money was to flow in on us. Now ask 'Doesn't it?' and I'll answer you."

"Well, you see, Jim, the peddling business is on the wrong basis."

"You bet it is!"

"Hold on a minute. We should offer the people a better article at a cheaper price than they can get elsewhere."

"Impossible combination, Ben."

"Not at all. This trade simply wants to be revolutionised from the top, and we, unfortunately, are working away at the bottom. There are too many middlemen's profits before the goods get to us."

"Why, hang it all, Ben, we're middlemen ourselves, mighty darn middling, too, I think."

"Yes, but we earn our percentage by bringing the goods right to people's doors."

"Oh, that's no good, Ben. The farmers take their produce to other people's doors. The fatal weakness of our position is that we want cash for our stuff, and won't take truck. Now, if you could say that the price of this paper of needles was two eggs instead of five cents you might do some business. The man at the village store does that, so how can we hope to compete with him on a cash basis? It can't be done, and the sooner we recognise that, the less time we'll lose. We can't lose money, because we haven't got it."

"But other fellows make money. I don't like the thought of giving up when there are men in the business making it pay."

"The others know how and we don't. We ought to have gone to a pedlars' college if we wanted to earn money at this trade. What's the use of quadratic equations here? Hello! Who's this chap coming up the hill in such a hurry? A pedlar, too, I'll bet a dollar; let's ask him how he works the oracle. He's in a smaller way of business than the firm of McAllister & Co., for he carries what he owns on his back."

Silence fell on the two comrades and partners as the newcomer approached. The sun had set, but a luminous twilight held the land, and the new breeze brought with it a promise of the night's coolness rather than the reality. The pedestrian proved to be a stalwart young man of twenty or thereabouts, well set up, with broad shoulders, a bull neck, and a face of stern determination.

"Hello, boys," he cried, in a voice loud and boisterous, but with a ring of good nature in it.

"Hello," replied Jim, "how are you making it?"

"Pretty cursedly hot at the present moment of speaking. Say are youse in the peddling line, too?"

"We are. And doing so well at it that my pard and I were thinking of buying the university building as a residence, only I don't like the cupola, while he wants to put a balcony round it, as there would be such

a good view. Not being able to agree on the subject, here we sit discussing the matter."

The stalwart man unslung the pack that was strapped over his shoulders and placed it on the ground, taking no notice of Jim's raillery. It was evident that something more serious occupied his thoughts.

"Say, have youse got a licence?"

"For peddling? Certainly. We've got all the modern improvements, except the knack of selling our wares."

"Say, let's have a look at it."

"What! Are you an inspector disguised as one of the fraternity?"

"I'm a pedlar all right enough, but I never had a licence, and they tell me I must get one. Ever been asked for it?"

"Oh, often, but never by another pedlar."

"Let's have a look at it."

Ben, who had the document in question, took it out of an inside pocket and handed it to the stranger, who glanced over the paper, then looked inquiringly at Jim.

"Your name McAllister?"

Jim threw his thumb in the direction of his comrade.

"My friend's name's McAllister. I'm the silent partner."

"Thanks," said the stranger, coolly folding up the licence again; but instead of handing it back to its owner he put it in one of his own pockets.

"Now, what do you mean by that?" demanded Jim.

"Oh, it's all right, fellers; I want to borrow it for a little, so that I can rest with a mind at ease. They've chased me all over town, and I'm about tired out. I thought I was going to get away from the cursed place by doubling on them and making for the depot, but there wasn't a train for two hours going anywhere, so I had to make a circuit, and take to the woods."

"That's all very well, but if the authorities come down on you for your licence, and you show ours, what's to become of us when we are questioned? If they come thus far after you, they are sure to demand our papers."

"Is that your rig?"

" Yes."

" Very well, it will be mine until later. You are merely two students come up for a breath of air from your boarding house. See? I'm the only pedlar in this outfit. See? I believe that's no lie, either."

Saying this, the pedlar rose, lifted his pack, and flinging it over the tailboard of the light waggon, spoke soothingly to the horse, which had lifted its head and pricked up its ears. Then he returned to the ditch and sat down again, pulling out a pipe as he did so.

" Well, stranger," said Jim, " for square downright cheek I never saw that equalled! Never! You first take our licence, then you appropriate our horse and waggon, without even saying ' By your leave.' I don't want to flatter you, but for brazen impudence I think you beat the record."

" Thanks. It's no flattery. Still, I am delighted to think we understand each other. Now, if an official comes I should be pleased if you will let me do the lying. I'm an expert, and you amateurs will merely bungle the matter. I ask this as a favour."

" Very well. The moment he comes we will stick to the truth and tell him we are not students at the university, but pedlars, and that you have stolen our licence."

" Oh, no you won't. Truth can be carried to excess, like everything else. You understand my plan. Now will you fall in with it, or won't you, that's the question? If you won't just say so like men, and then I'll lick you both and have it over."

Jim rose at this with clenched fist, indignant; the challenger did not move from his place, but looked lowering at him across the shallow ditch, evidently on the alert should the other mean business. Ben, however, held up his hand and addressed his comrade.

" Jim, what's the matter with you? This man is in the same line as ourselves; like us he's a stranger in a strange land, and if he's in trouble and we can help him, we're going to do it."

" McAllister, you're a white man; shake!" said the stranger, suddenly projecting his powerful paw across

the ditch. They shook, and Jim sat down again, grumbling that this was all very well, but they would get themselves into trouble, and anyhow he did not like the stranger's method of asking for assistance. The stranger took a jackknife from his trousers pocket, picked up a bit of stick that had been stranded on the bank when the dry ditch was in flood, began shaping it to a point with long strokes of the blade, tapering it at last with minute care, as if it were intended for some particular purpose, which it was not.

The silence that fell upon the group after peace had been so nearly broken was at last disturbed by the distant whirr of buggy wheels, like the murmur of some gigantic insect in the still summer evening. The vehicle came in sight at the foot of the hill and rapidly began to ascend. "It's a shame to push a horse up a hill like that," said the big pedlar, glancing towards the approaching conveyance, which contained two persons. "I expect they know I've taken to the country, and a man in a buggy will be searching all the roads that lead out of Ann Arbor."

The horse was pulled up sharply at the brow of the hill, and a dapper man sprang nimbly to the ground. The big pedlar was carefully and laboriously rounding the end of the stick, which under the deft manipulations of the blade had taken on somewhat the shape of a stiletto without the cross bar. He seemed to have no curiosity regarding the advent of the carriage passenger, his whole attention being occupied by the cabinet work in hand. His knife was marvellously sharp and cut through the aromatic Michigan pine as if it were cheese.

"You were peddling in town this afternoon, I believe?" said the dapper man advancing.

"Who? Me?"

"Yes. Do you deny it?"

"Wouldn't think of contradicting a gentleman."

"Well, I'd just like to see your licence, if you please."

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours—if you have one."

" Licence for what? I don't sell no liquor."

" Licence for peddling—you know what I mean. Produce it."

" Oh, you want to see it."

" Yes, I do."

" You want to see the *licence.*"

" Yes, sir."

" *My* licence."

" Yes, and I don't want to stay here all night either."

" Certainly not. Certainly not. Yet it's nice up here on top of the hill. And say, Ann Arbor's a nice town, isn't it? Nice people there, I should judge. So these university students tell me."

" Look here, my man; I'm not here to discuss the town or the people of Ann Arbor. Will you stop whittling for a minute and give me your attention? If you've got a licence, I want to see it; if you haven't, I must trouble you to come back with me."

" In the buggy? It won't hold three very handily. These side bars have such awfully narrow boxes; still, they're good for speed. There's more style about 'em than a phaeton, although a phaeton's comfortable. But a combination of a good trotter and a light side bar's hard to beat, either on the track or for general finish and natty appearance. This a livery rig, or your own? "

" Will you walk down town with me peaceably, or shall I have to arrest you? "

" Oh, thanks, but I'm not going down town. Seen all I wanted of the place this afternoon; rather in a hurry, but still I got a very good idea of its layout. Nice place. Say, I didn't sell a thing in Ann Arbor; so help me, I didn't. Give you my word of honour as a gentleman I didn't. Oath on a stack of Bibles I didn't."

" That makes no difference. You tried to."

" Is that the law? "

" That's the law, and I ask you to respect it."

" Oh, I do. I'm a law-abiding citizen, I am. What would we be without the law? Anarchists, that's what we'd be. And I respect the guardians of the law, too. Always have done so. I'm a stickler for law."

"I'm very glad to hear it. Will you show me your licence or walk down town with me?"

"I don't *have* to walk. That's my rig there. I'd better drive down with you."

"Very well, come along. Where was that horse and waggon when you were peddling in town to-day?"

"Trying to peddle, you mean. Oh, I always leave my horse out in the country and take in a shoulder pack with me. Saves any amount of trouble, for that horse is apt to be a bit lively on the streets, as you can very well see. There's a bit of blood in that horse, although you might not think so. Pure Kentucky stock; bought him in Lexington. You see by the shape of him that—"

"I can't talk here all night, you know."

"You don't need to. I'm always willing to do the talking in whatever company I am. Sorry I can't offer you a drink; however, we can get that in the village."

The young man rose slowly to his feet, stretched himself lazily and yawned, bringing down his arms with a resounding slap against his sides and thighs.

"Come, now, have you got any licence?" asked the official.

"Have I? Well, now what kind of licence did you want, state, town or county?"

"Any one of the three will do."

"Oh, that's good. Now you've asked a number of questions about me. Suppose I ask some about you. You're an inspector of licences, you tell me. State of Michigan, county of Washtenaw or town of Ann Arbor?"

"Town of Ann Arbor, where you were peddling."

"Trying to peddle. Perhaps you think I haven't got a licence?"

"I *know* you haven't. I've heard of you before, and we've been laying for you, and now we've got you."

"Oh, that's the state of the case is it?" cried the pedlar truculently, advancing on the other with clenched fists, while his adversary retreated step by step. "Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

"Yes. You are going to accompany me quietly, and not make a fool of yourself. I will call on the three here

in the name of the state to assist an officer of the law, if you attempt violence."

" If it comes to violence I can readily take care of the four of you including the horse and buggy. Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

" I know what I'm going to do with you. I arrest you for resisting a duly qualified officer of the law." Saying this the official whipped out of his pocket a gleaming revolver. Before he could raise it the firm hand of the pedlar darted like a hawk on the officer's wrist and the revolver went off harmlessly with a sharp smiting crack, the bullet raising a spit of dust on the road. Ben and Jim sprang to their feet, the former shouting, " Don't resist an officer." The horse in the buggy reared on its hind legs, the other in the waggon barely raised its head, in spite of its Kentucky blood, which should have been responsive to the click of such a weapon.

The pedlar, smiling faintly, gently detached the fingers of his opponent from the butt of the pistol, withdrew it from the reluctant hand and slipped the deadly instrument into his own coat pocket. Then he said as calmly as if the conversation had not been interrupted:

" Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

" No, I don't."

" Why, I'm going to show you my licence, as you seem so anxious to look at it." Saying this the young man patted his coat, above and beneath, slapped his trousers as if not sure where he kept the paper, then finally drew it from an inside pocket and handed it deferentially to the officer. The latter, somewhat bewildered, unfolded the document and scrutinised it suspiciously, holding it up so that the last tinges of light from the evening sky illuminated it faintly.

" Shall I strike a match? I try to peddle 'em, you know."

" Your name's McAllister, is it?"

" Yes. Christened Benjamin. Commonly known as Ben; Ben the pedlar."

" Where did you get this paper?"

" At Lansing. Isn't that written down there?"

"Why did you make such efforts to evade me in town to-day if you had this licence?"

"Bless you, how was I to know that you merely wanted the licence? Evade you? You bet. I thought you were after me for grand larceny, or had found out I had just escaped from state prison at Jackson. Thunder! If I'd known you only wanted the licence, it would have saved me a foot race."

"How am I to know that you are the person named in this paper?"

"Is that a conundrum? I give it up. How? What's the answer?"

Perhaps the frivolous and often insulting nature of the pedlar's replies did more to convince the officer that he was on the wrong track than if the demeanour of the culprit had been cringing and supplicative. It did not seem possible that a man who was not sure of his legal standing could be so independent and impertinent. Be that as it may the officer folded the paper and handed it back, receiving in exchange the revolver which the pedlar with a flourish presented to and not at him.

"Thank you," said the officer. "Good evening."

"O dear me, no. The discussion's just in its prime. You must listen to me for a while, me boy. Now, you seem to have some queer ideas about the importance of your official position which I'd like put right before we part. The citizens of these United States are sovereigns that delegate to youse whatever power ye'r swinging. In consequence of this, the two positions of an ordinary citizen and an official take on the status of master and servant. An official shud keep his eye peeled to carry out his duties with this fact in view, and to take care that his acts are sort of whitewashed with courtesy and justice where they come into contact with the liberty of a citizen."

"I quite agree with you."

"Begobs, sur, ye can't do otherwise. It must be the constant endeavour of an official to confine himself shtrictly to the limits of the power enthrusted to him, be the people, because the moment he oversteps that

power he becomes a tyrant, a thing not to be borne in this free land."

" All that is admitted. If you are referring to me in this harangue, I would call your attention to the fact that I have not exceeded my rights nor infringed on yours. I have at all times stood ready to show the authority under which I act."

" You were not ready a short time since. If you are ready now so much the better. I request you to show me by what right you asked to see my licence."

" Certainly. I never refused it. There is my warrant."

The pedlar examined the paper handed to him as carefully as the official had perused his licence.

" It is just as I suspected," he said at last. " You had every right to stop me within the town limits of Ann Arbor, but the moment your buggy wheels crossed the boundary line of that town you were N. G., and your authority wint up a tree. When you hopped out of this rig and accosted me, more especially when you made a demand for the production of papers, you were performing an act of tyranny or in simpler words ye were acting the pirate. But when you pulled a gun on me, that outside the boundaries of Ann Arbor you had no right to carry, and when you discharged it, you at once placed yourself in the category of such criminals as the holder-up of a train or the highway robber. The moment your weapon came into view I should have been legally justified in killing you in your tracks, and any jury or judge in this land would have held that I done right. Now what have you to say for yourself? "

The official stood with one foot on the ground and the other elevated, resting on the buggy step. His right hand grasped an iron stanchion rising from the seat end of the vehicle. All motion seemed stricken from him by the sudden change in the manner of the pedlar, and for a time he made no reply to the question so sternly asked him. The driver of the buggy sat with dropped jaw, looking like one hypnotised at the towering man in the road, whose strong face, with its fierce, overhanging, shaggy brows, and its massive, obstinate jaw, took on a

strange light from the glow of the evening sky as he stood erect facing the west. He made no threatening gestures, no gestures at all, in fact, but his voice had a deep, accusing ring in it that thrilled his listeners, especially the two young men seated by the roadside, who seemed to forget, under the spell of his eloquence, that this man, from whom all levity had suddenly fallen, was fraudulent, standing thus stoutly for the rights of a citizen on the insecure foundation of a false name and purloined credentials. He had assumed all the dignity of an implacable and just judge, and his victim seemed to cower before his impregnable statement of the case. At last the official spoke, with a poor attempt at nonchalance:

"I have no desire to carry this matter any further, if you haven't."

"Then the first thing I want from you is an abject apology, given in the presence of these three men, before whom you infringed upon my rights," said the pedlar, sternly.

"Very well; I have no hesitation in saying that I am sorry I acted as I did, and I ask you—abjectly, if you like—to pardon me."

There came an instant change in the rigid attitude of the accuser, the old semi-sarcastic smile parted his firm lips, and a humorous twinkle again lit up his eye.

"That's all right and 'nuf sed. A man can't do more than say he's sorry, at least not much more, unless the injured person is a pedlar and in that case the overbearing tyrant can help to grease the wheels of legitimate commerce. You see, from circumstances over which I had mighty little control, I did no business to-day. He who runs may read, perhaps, if the print is large enough, but I give you my word he can't engage in traffic. Say, officer, I've got some of the finest writing paper and envelopes here you ever see. Made by the Eagle paper works of Limestone, Mass. Such paper has never before been sold in the West at the price I am offering it. I give it to you straight that official utterances penned on this paper, if you can pen utterances, command a respect they

could never otherwise obtain short of parchment. And only a quarter a package; twenty-five cents takes the lot. What do you say, officer? "

While he went glibly on he had taken from the tail of the waggon his black knapsack, and with a deftness that indicated long practice threw off the clasps and split the box in two, throwing back each hinged half on his knee, thus displaying the wares within.

" Oh, I see," remarked the inspector dryly, " I am to be a purchaser, am I? Is this a compulsory addition to the apology? "

" Of course not. The apology came quite naturally because you were a gentleman, and this trading follows just as naturally because ye want to help in a business revival. You insist on having the package of stationery? Very good; it's yours. Now paper and envelopes are useless 'less ye've pens. Here's the very finest pen in the market. Dodd's celebrated Jumping Juniper. Ten in a box and dirt cheap at a quarter. You *will* have 'em, eh? Right you are. Sold again and got the tin. That makes half a dollar. Bottle of ink? No? Got in your autumn stock of the fluid. All right; we pass that. How about pencils, in case your ink gets frozen during August? Ten for fifty cents, half a dollar takes the lot. Best in the world, made especially for the Michigan market with lead so firm and unbreakable that they are often extracted by the wives of our pioneers to use as knitting needles. Some of our best statesmen have acquired their arithmetic with these pencils, while wearing the stockings knit by their leads. With the assistance of these pencils an official can send in a bill for expenses to the government that will bring in double what he paid out, a thing that can be done with no other brand. Must have the whole packet? I thought so. That totals up to a dollar."

" Just take one of the pencils and make out your account for two dollars; if you are satisfied to let it go at that, I am."

" Oh, no. This is the only travelling aggregation on the road where you get the worth of your money either in

the big tent or at the side shows, so here you are for buttons. Button, button, who's got the button? Why, you have, of course. These cards of assorted buttons are the last rock of refuge to the lonely bachelor, and the light and blessing of the happy home. Sixteen cards of variegated buttons for a dollar, and you never made a better bargain in your life. Well, here's the whole outfit. Two dollars; thank you, sir, and I'll make out a receipt next time I'm in the neighbourhood. Sorry to have put you to the trouble of coming out all this distance for your goods. I'd cheerfully have called on you either at your residence or at your office. Will know where to drop in when I'm on my next round. Good-evening."

The pedlar stood in the road and watched the buggy turn round and drive rapidly down the hill toward the town of twinkling lights. Then he said to the two sitting there, " Peddling's a business like everything else. It all depends on knowing how to do it. See? "

CHAPTER II

"HE'LL TURN YOUR CURRENT IN A DITCH"

BEN MCALLISTER the actual rose to his feet, crossed the ditch and stood on the darkening road confronting Ben McAllister the apocryphal. Jim followed his example. During the last few minutes McAllister's sensitive mind had undergone some extreme variations, and the result of alternate tension and relaxation was now depression, as if he had been through a mental debauch and was suffering from the consequent headache. He was a fervent lover of truth. Probably some of his ancestors had died for it, and heredity, quite unsuspected by himself, had mixed in his make-up the ingredients of which martyrs are made. There existed deep down in his nature a stratum of undeveloped religious enthusiasm which might some day change him into a fanatic. He was not cognisant of these things, for no country is so unknown to a young man as the labyrinths of his own soul. Ben's estimate of himself depicted a simple-minded person with an eager desire to get on in the world, honestly of course, with an exaggerated estimate of the powers of others and an undue depreciation of his own, yet doggedly determined to do the best with the resources given him, a resolution modified by the constantly recurring fear that he would not know how to make the best use of the opportunities that might befall him.

His nerves had tingled as he listened to the pedlar's denunciation of tyranny, and his back stiffened as he heard the rights of citizenship so eloquently laid down; but when a moment later the serious mask was jauntily tossed aside for the comic and Ben realised that the fervid declamation was for the occasion only and not

from the heart—that conviction played no part in the oratory—and more especially when he saw the pedlar turn to commercial uses, almost blackmail indeed, the dilemma of the victim with whom he verbally played, McAllister experienced a sensation of loathing that made further communication with the charlatan almost impossible.

He looked at his comrade expecting to find in his face some reflection of the feeling that animated his own breast, but he saw no trace of such. There was, instead, an undeniable expression of admiration for the business dexterity which had so successfully extracted good money from a situation which at one time seemed desperate. Jim shared the almost universal veneration for the player with the trump card who takes the odd trick.

"If you will return to me my licence," said Ben slowly, "we will get on with our journey. It's late."

"Where do you think you're going?" inquired the stranger with genial curiosity.

"I don't know."

"Well, I'm bound for the same place."

"I want my licence."

"Oh, see here. We ain't going to part company just yet. I've taken a notion to you fellows. You stood by me like a couple of bricks, and a man does not pick up a real friend on the road every day. No, sir; I ain't going to let go of you so quick as all that; besides, I can see that you don't know any more about peddling than a couple of infants. Say, you shouldn't be allowed out on the road alone, especially at night. I'm going to take care of you."

"The first thing I want is my licence; after that we can talk of the future. I lent you the licence, it served your turn; now give it back to me if you are an honourable man."

"I never claimed to be an honourable man, though I'm not such a liar as you think. I'm a pedlar. Besides, you wouldn't know what to do with the licence if you had it."

"It's mine," persisted Ben,

"Of course it's yours. Who denies it? Although you must admit that possession's nine points, and I've got possession. Fact is, the ownership of the paper is a debatable question, and I'm quite willing to go into it on the most amicable and conciliatory basis. You see I'm like the man with the tiger by the tail, I don't know whether to hang on or let go. I must have time to turn round. That fellow who went down the hill may get madder and madder the more he thinks about the business, and I for one wouldn't blame him. Trouble is the livery stable man. The story will be too good to keep, and by this time to-morrow it will be all over the town. Everybody will be shouting across the street to that inspector, 'Is this your day for buying stationery?' or 'How are you stocked on buttons?' Now he's going to have revenge; that's human nature. He'll put the state authorities on to me, and I simply daren't let go this paper till I get one of my own. You see my fix."

"Still," expostulated Jim, standing up for his friend, who made no reply to this statement of the case, "the paper is ours, all the same. If you think we can't get it back, you are mistaken. All we've got to do is to go down the hill to that official, tell him the truth and send the sheriff after you."

"I'll tell you why you can't do that," said the pedlar with great good nature. "You sat there without saying a word while I bluffed him. You didn't wag a jaw when I held him up and sold things to him. Then was your time to speak or forever after hold your peace, as the marriage ceremony has it. You, in a way, compounded a felony, if it was a felony. Whatever it was, anyhow, you're in it, and you can't help yourselves. By the way, have youse got any money?"

"Do you want that, too?" asked Jim.

"I wouldn't mind. Still, we don't need the cash, except perhaps for a bite to eat, and sometimes not even for that if we strike a white man. As for a bedroom, there's nothing beats a barn with a nice hay-mow in it this time of the year; but I think we ought to be getting

farther from town, where the farmers are not so suspicious and don't keep their barns locked."

"As my friend has already said, the first proviso is the giving back of our property. We want the licence," said Jim.

"Then don't let's waste time, but discuss the matter as we go along."

Saying this the pedlar carried his black box once more to the waggon, flung it in, patted the patient horse, gathered up the reins and climbed into the rickety seat as if he were proprietor of the conveyance. Behind the one seat were two square receptacles which held the goods the young men had been endeavouring to turn into money.

"Come on, youse, if you're coming," commanded the pedlar, crying over his shoulder to the two indistinct figures that stood irresolute some distance back on the road.

"What are we to do?" whispered Ben in accents of despair. "I don't like that fellow at all and don't want to travel in his company, yet he seems quite capable of driving off with our horse, waggon and licence if we don't go with him."

"Say! Are youse coming, or are ye not?" shouted the stranger.

"Well, there is only one of three things to do," commented Jim, "go with him, let him drive off with our property, or take our property from him."

"Can we, do you think? That is, can we take it from him?"

"We can try."

"For the third and last time, are youse coming with me?" repeated the pedlar.

The two comrades rapidly approached the side of the waggon, and the pedlar, chortling to himself, sat as far over to the driving end of the seat as he could, to make room for them.

"I think there's space enough for the three of us, but if the middle man finds himself uncomfortably

crowded, he can easily step back and get a very good place on one of them boxes."

Jim was the spokesman of their new resolve, and his voice was angry.

"For the third and last time, as you said yourself, or for the fourth or fifth or sixth and last, will you give up that licence, or shall we have to take it from you?"

"Do you mean that?" cried the pedlar, dropping the reins.

"Every word of it."

With a whoop the intruder sprang into the air clear of the waggon, flinging his arms aloft as if he were about to fly. Before there was time for the two to jump he was down upon them, an arm around each neck like Samson grasping the pillars, bearing them to the ground as if a tree had fallen upon them. When they realised what had happened he had a hand clutching each throat and a knee on each breast, holding them absolutely helpless. There was no trace of annoyance or malice in his voice as he spoke.

"Is it a coercion act ye would be after puttin' on me? Is that the way one gentleman should address another? Will ye give it up, says you, or shall we take it from ye? Thunder and turf! the answer to that question is plain enough. Ye'll take it from me. And now set to work at it, an' let me know when you get it."

There was now little doubt of his nationality, for while he did not talk with a brogue, there was nevertheless an accent in his sentences brought on by the excitement of the encounter that distinctly pointed to Irish extraction at least.

Jim made some laudable attempts to strike his assailant in the face, which ineffectual blows the uppermost man easily evaded by holding back his head and tightening his grip on Jim's throat. This caused a cessation of efforts which the under man speedily recognised to be unavailing.

"It's your time to call the game now, so what are ye going to do about it? I'm quite comfortable here for the night. Are youse as content?"

"Let us up!" gasped Ben. "We had no intention of resorting to violence."

"Is it resorting to violence? And sure if ye did it would be against the most peaceable man in all this world, the more shame to you; a man simply thirsting for friendship; and we'll take it from ye, says you. Now, I'm equally ready for a scuffle or a hug, whichever ye like; for a smack in the jaw or a shake of the hand, each entirely welcome and returned with cordiality."

"Where's your liberty of the citizen, and your freedom of the highway now, you flannel-mouthed Paddy; you Irish hoodlum!" cried Jim, who was displeased and too much excited to speak diplomatically, which proved to be a tactical mistake in the circumstances, evidenced by an increased tightening of the grip and weightier pressure of the knee.

"And that's one lie to your credit, for I'm as good an American as you are, in spite of the fact that I was born in the old sod, but left it when I was less than two years old, and that was as reasonably early as one could be expected to recognise an original mistake; but as good as you are and as bad as I am, I am as good as you are, as bad as I am. Do ye hear that, now? And as for them things you speak of on the highway, they go right down fornenst a threat, as you'll be able to testify ever after. Liberty and freedom are all very well taken in moderation, like the truth we were discussing a while since, but too much of anything is bad for a person. Avoid excess, me boy, if ye want to live long and have a peaceful time on the earth."

"It's an interesting subject, and I would rather argue it out on my feet, if you don't mind," said Jim more calmly.

"Right you are, and sense is returning to you," replied their oppressor, without, however, making a motion to relieve them. "Will ye be decent comrades to me for a day or two, and will ye let the licence rest until I have it clear in my mind what is best to be done with it?"

"Yes, yes," said the parties of the second part, thoroughly defeated. The victor sprang from them as nimbly

as he had descended upon them, and a moment later was industriously brushing the dust from their coats, as if their fall had been a deplorable accident which he sympathetically regretted.

He was the first to climb into the waggon, taking the reins again as if the question of his leadership and possession had been amicably settled. Touching up the unambitious horse with the beech gad which took the place of a whip, they jogged along in the darkness toward the east, while he rattled on, giving advice and relating experiences as if nothing untoward had marred the serenity of their companionship. The other two for the most part kept silence, oppressed by the feeling that they were in a measure the guests of the driver, and rather intruders on his hospitality.

"You see, there is nothing to be made on the main thoroughfare, because there's too many travelling that way. Our dodge is to get off on a side road as soon as we can, and then folks are glad to meet us. I don't suppose you could get a bed or a meal of victuals from here clear through to Detroit, that is, for nothing, and the nearer you come to a big town the harder it is to forage. I always strike in for the unfrequented districts when I want something to eat and don't want to pay for it.

"Now I propose not to continue east toward Wayne county, but to strike angleways north toward Oakland, or angleways south toward Monroe county, whichever way you say, or shall we leave it to chance and take the first cross-road we come to? It makes no sort of differ to me, so I leave it for you boys to call the game." The pedlar said this with an air of accommodating magnanimity that resembled the gracious condescension of a monarch. There was no reply for some minutes, then McAllister, who was above everything good natured and wished to relieve the tension of the situation, said:

"I guess Monroe county would suit Jim best."

"Then Monroe it is. Do you know anybody there?"

"His name's Monro, that's all," returned Ben.

"Oh, I see. Be gubs, we're all M's. Mine's Maguire; Patrick Maguire. You'll be saying that's Irish next."

"Oh, no. It strikes me as Norman-French," replied Jim sullenly.

Maguire laughed.

"True for ye," replied the Irishman. "It's Norman New York, that's what it is, and that's where I'm working my way back. There's no money in the West, or at least if there is, them that have it don't want to part with it. It doesn't seem to me I get my share among these pine woods millionaires and steamboat kings between here and Chicago. I hope there's better luck waiting me in the East. I tell you what it is, boys, we're going to stand a mighty good chance of being hungry to-night. We fooled too long at the top of the hill, for people go to bed early in these rural districts, making up by that infamy the still more atrocious crime of early rising. Here, get a move on you."

He applied the switch to the back of the listless horse, that ambled along through the night, the silence of which the waggon disturbed by the screeching of the axles.

"Say, boys, you ought to keep your axles greased. Make it easier for the horse, and not so melodious, as we jog along life's weary way."

"You ought to grease them," said Jim. "We have nothing to do with this rig."

Maguire laughed loudly.

"That's so. I forgot. I'll attend to it in the morning. Hello, stranger, where are you off to this time o' night?"

Maguire pulled up the horse, which evinced no desire to proceed against the will of its driver, and a man appeared out of the darkness, approaching in a friendly way, coming to a halt and placing his foot on the hub of the front wheel, peering up at them as if to learn whether he had been accosted by neighbours or not. Anyhow, he was disposed to have a friendly chat.

"I'm a-goin' home, where be you a-goin'?"

"Well, we're looking for a hotel, perhaps you can give us some directions."

"I thought you were strangers, fur I didn't recognise the horse as belonging to these parts. Guess ye kind of

got out of yer way, hain't ye? Ye won't find no hotels in this district, leastways I never hear tell of 'em. Won't find a tavern nearer than Ann Arbor or Ypsilanti, and there they do stick it on to ye. A dollar a day, a dollar a day every time, an' don't you forget it. If a man's got plenty of money, all right; if not, the best thing he can do is keep away from them."

"They do sock it to you, don't they?"

"You bet. I donno jest where ye cud stay; ye see folks is pretty busy jest now, an' full up with hired men. Ain't looking fur a job harvesting, be ye? fur if that's the case I guess there won't be no trouble. Hands is powerful skase this season; most always are, come to think of it."

"Well, we wouldn't object to a job if we found one to suit us, at least we would take supper and bed to-night, and then see about the job in the morning after breakfast."

"I guess us farmers gets lots o' such chances as that. It don't happen ye be pedlars, do it?"

"It happens kind of that way."

"Well, them sort of folks don't jest 'pear to be real pop'lar in the country, most farmers 'lowin' they're sort o' cheats, puttin' it straight like, and meanin' no offence, present company bein' excepted, in a manner o' speakin'."

"Certainly, certainly; we're all of us frauds more or less, excepting the farmers who wouldn't cheat in measure or quality if you paid 'em for it." The man with his foot on the hub laughed heartily at this.

"Well, them as don't cheat finds it mighty hard to make a livin' nowadays. Didn't ust to be so in the old times, but I donno, I donno. Guess take 'em year in an' year out, folks is pretty much the same, straight along. Kin ye bind grain?"

"I don't know about binding it, but I would guarantee to eat some of the product if I got a chance. You see, we ain't so much looking for a harvest field to-night as a supper table."

"How far'd ye come?"

"We drove from Ann Arbor."

"Well, your horse looks about done out, and I guess it ain't much of a horse when it isn't done out. Get left on a trade?"

"No. Bought it for cash."

"Want to make a dicker? I've got one I'll trade ye fur fifteen dollars to boot, an' then I'd be losing money, for I don't see much in that there horse."

"Of course you don't, because you're no judge of horse flesh. That's a Kentucky bred animal. There's blood in that horse, and it can do its good mile in two hours without turning a hair, and I've got money to bet that it can."

"Ye hev, eh? I've got a wooden horse at home 'll beat that nag o' yourn, even start from a hilltop—providin' th' hill's steep enough."

The man laughed boisterously at his own humour, being thus always sure of an appreciative audience. Jim spoke up:

"This arranging of horse trades and horse races is all very well at the proper time, but this isn't the time. I'm hungry, and the question I'd like to see discussed is where are we going to get something to eat. I suppose you couldn't give us a snack?"

"O good Lord, no," cried the man hastily, taking his foot down from the hub and retiring modestly a few steps back into the darkness, his sense of hospitality evidently taking fright at the thought of three persons and a horse. "I'm on a small place a long way from here, livin' in a kind of shanty at that, an' my old woman's gone to bed long ago, an' I expect I'll catch gally-wast as it is fur bein' out s'late m'self. No. I'll tell ye what to do. You go right on till you come to the schoolhouse, you'll see th' lights in it at the next turn, everybody in the section's there, 'cept me, an' I've just left. If you say you want a job to-morrow you'll have lots o' chances fur supper to-night."

"What's on at the schoolhouse? Prayer meeting, singing school, magic lantern show, or what?"

"No, tain't one ort'other; it's an 'lection meeting."

"What! An election at this time of the year?"

"Well, a sorter kinder 'lection in a way of speakin', 'special 'lection fur this here district an' the 'joinin' one. Seems kinder stupid to put it right in th' middle ah harvest time, but that's all them folks knows what fixes up them things. Ye see the question comes down to this: Ditch or no ditch?"

"Well, that's perfectly clear . . . as clear as ditch-water. Which side are you on?"

"Oh, say, Maguire," protested Jim, "I'm on the side of supper, and hang the ditch. Let's get on, there's no use in pottering away here. I believe Ben's asleep as it is, and I know the horse dropped off long ago."

"Now, you keep your hair on. Don't you fret. If you want to succeed in a neighbourhood you must post yourself on the subject that interests that neighbourhood. Go on about this here ditch, stranger."

The stranger, seeing that there was no further hint of attack on his larder, had advanced again and had replaced his cowhide boot on the hub, quite palpably prepared to spend the night in amiable converse, in spite of his formerly expressed fear of his wife.

"Well, I'm agin it myself; so's most o' them at the schoolhouse, and that's why we met to take steps for a veto at the polls. Ye see they think they want a big ditch t' dreen a swamp a few miles from here, an' put a tax on all the property all round to pay fur it, so much a year fur ten years. Well, we say let them as wants this ditch pay fur it."

"That seems reasonable."

"Well, the other fellows don't want to do that; they say it's for the improvement of all this part of the country, and so all this part of the country ought to be taxed fur it."

"That seems reasonable, too. So you're going to vote on it. Which side's going to win?"

"Well, I cud tell ye that better day after 'lection. It's about nip an' tuck, six o' one and half a dozen o' t'other."

"All right. Most interesting situation. Thanks ever

so much. Think they won't all have left the schoolhouse by the time we can get there?"

"Well, I guess not if ye hurry."

"Oh, we've just got the animal for speed. Good-night. Git up, there."

The harvest moon had risen while they talked and had gradually outlined the beauties of the landscape as a picture is slowly developed on a photographic plate. The plaintive cry of the whippoorwill came from a neighbouring thicket, ending abruptly in a "kuh-whip" as the screeching waggon approached. The schoolhouse proved to be a wooden structure with three windows on each side and a small porch and double door at the end facing the road. It stood some distance back from the thoroughfare near the centre of a plot half an acre or so in area, surrounded by a board fence. The gate had been taken off its hinges and had disappeared, and the ground was as barren as a similar piece of the great desert. Not a tree nor a shrub nor a flower gladdened the eye in the educational yard, although this was a land of trees, shrubs and flowers.

The lights were out in the schoolhouse, and the meeting had dispersed, but a number of enthusiasts lingered round the gateway, some leaning against the fence, others seated on the inclined board, which from its rain-shedding function was nailed to the top of the cedar posts at an angle slightly less than that of the roof of a house, and thus, on occasion, formed a somewhat insecure elevated bench. Some smoked and listened. Others laid down the law in animated fashion.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," cried Maguire, pulling up opposite the group.

"Evenin'," came the answering salutation from several, all talk ceasing for the moment.

"Well, gentlemen," said Maguire, facing round to them, dropping the reins and throwing his right leg over the end of the seat, letting his foot swing easily, "this is going to be a pretty close contest."

"You bet it is," cried one, a trace of astonishment in

his voice at being accosted by a stranger who showed such familiarity with purely local affairs.

" The chances are, gentlemen, that this here ditch is going to be dug, and every spadeful taken out of the trench takes a portion of cash out of your pockets, and, as times go, there ain't any too much money there now compared with the amount of work you have to put in to accumulate it. Now, offhand, the way it strikes a sane man without interest in the question either way is that whoever wants that there ditch dug let them put their hands in their own pockets and pay for it, and meanwhile keep their claws out of your purses and mine."

" Hear, hear!" " Bully fur you!" " That's the way to talk!" " That hits the nail on the head!" " Now you're shouting!" were some of the cries that greeted these sentiments expressed from the light waggon.

" You got a vote in these parts?" inquired a cautious old farmer who was leaning against the gate-post.

" No, I ain't, but I got something that's a darned sight better; I've got a proposal to make and the brains and the energy to back it. You hear the toot of my bazoo, I'm a pedlar myself and I go all over this country, and I hear what people are talking about. They talk freely with me, because they know I haven't a vote, and I'm here to-day and gone to-morrow, so it don't make no difference one way or t'other, an' I talk free with them, just as I do with you and everybody else. All right. Consequence is that the way you're a-going on you're going to get licked, an' that's what's the matter with the hoss."

" Oh, I don't know 'bout that," demurred a bystander.

" Of course you don't: that's why I'm telling ye. See? You'll know about it after the voting, but that'll be too late. Now's the time to know, when it will do some good. I tell you, you're licked at this present moment, and you don't need to take the trouble of going to the polls at all, because your staying home will only make the ditch majority bigger and won't affect the result. The taxes will be there just the same. Now, what you lack is organisation; you want a machine on this thing. But organisa-

tion takes time and you haven't the time to spare at this season of the year. Think of the darn fool idea of bringing on a vote right in the middle of harvest! That shows you how much those in authority know of the wants of the farming community. Now, I'll take hold of this organisation business, and I've got two good men here to help me. We'll first canvass the section and find out how everybody is going to vote. Just as it is in this crowd, there will be some fellows on the fence." (There was a laugh at this, and Maguire, warming with his theme, stood up in the waggon.) "Very well, it's the simplest possible question in addition and subtraction. Say we want five or ten—we find that out when the canvass is finished—we've got to induce five or ten of those fellows on the fence to come down, and to come down in our yard at that."

"Whatter you goin' to make out of it?" asked the cautious individual.

"Now that's the way I like to hear a man talk," continued Maguire, admiringly. "What am I going to make out of it? If I told you I was doing this for my health, or because I simply loved this farming community, you'd know I was a liar, wouldn't you—or a politician, which is exactly the same thing? Now, as I told you, I'm a pedlar, and if I make a good living at it that's simply because I sell goods at a price about half, and less than half you could get them elsewhere, same quality. You needn't laugh, I can prove it to you now if anybody's got some cash in his pocket. Any gentleman oblige me by handing up a dollar and see how much I give for it? No takers? This isn't market day I suppose. No gentleman's entitled to question my remarks unless he stands ready to test 'em by producing the coin. It's a case of put up or shut up. Well, as I was saying, I've made money at this business simply because nobody can compete with me. That's right. I'm giving it to you straight. Why, one of the biggest officials in Ann Arbor, this very evening, got out a livery stable rig and followed me along the Ypsilanti road and bought two dollars' worth of goods from me, and it paid him to do it, too, after settling for the

buggy and all. You can ask these two young men who are with me if you won't take my word for it, and I never saw either of them before to-day; ain't it just as I state it, boys?" (appealing to Ben and Jim). "You saw him follow me and you heard the very first words he spoke. 'Are you the fellow that was peddling in Ann Arbor this afternoon?' he says. You heard him, and you saw me sell him the goods and get the two dollars, now didn't you?"

"Yes," said Ben. "He did follow you in a buggy, and you did sell him two dollars' worth of goods, but—"

"Why, of course. I wouldn't give you any guff, for I know 'twouldn't be any use. But I hope to be struck in my tracks if it isn't true. Well, then, I expect to do a good deal of business in this district, and the better I'm known the more business I'll do, and when I leave you'll all be after me, like that fellow in Ann Arbor."

"What'll you be trying to get away with? Hŏrses?"

"That's all right, boys; I can take a joke as well as the next man. I don't need no horses, because I've got the best nag in the place, as you can see for yourselves. Racing stock, that animal is. Got overheated winning the Darby at Louisville, and has been trying to get rested ever since. No, gentlemen; I don't ask a cent for organising this campaign and putting the other fellows in the ditch they don't want to pay for, but I'd like to have a little of your good will, and when you come to do business with me—any article not found satisfactory, money cheerfully refunded. And now—to come to the point, for it's getting late—and I don't seem to be able to get a word in edgeways in this discussion—who's the leader on our side of the fence, or I should say on our side of the ditch?"

Several answered promptly: "Byfield. Step forward, Byfield. He's asking for you."

"All right, Mr. Byfield, what do you say?" queried Maguire, glancing over the assemblage, when an elderly man who had taken no part in the debate hitherto stepped forward and cleared his throat. Maguire fastened his gaze on Byfield as if he had known all along who he was.

"I guess it's pretty much as the stranger says," remarked Byfield slowly, "and we'll need all the help we can get. If these men don't want any cash out of pocket, I guess it might pay us to listen to what their plans are; but I for one don't guarantee anything."

"Certainly not and 'nuff sed," proclaimed Maguire, cordially. "Well, as I remarked, it is getting late and everybody wants to go home. I know I'm tired, for we came lickety-blinder all the way from Ann Arbor to be present at this meeting and nearly arrived too late, all on account of this official delaying us. I'll see you in the morning, Mr. Byfield, and lay my plans before you, and now if you will oblige us by telling me the way to the nearest hotel we'll be jogging on, for we took such a hurried supper at Ann Arbor that I want to get something more to eat."

"As fur a hotel," said Byfield, solemnly, "there ain't any, but if you don't mind roughing it a bit you could come with me. I kin give you a place to put the horse, and a bed in the loft if you don't mind sleeping three together."

"Oh, anything will do for us. I'd rather sleep in the hay-mow than anywhere else. These boys will take to the loft, and I'll bunk in the hay. Lord! I know how crowded things are at a farmhouse in harvest time. I was raised on a farm. Well, boys, so long. See you later."

With this he took up the reins and drove slowly down the road, the farmer refusing his gracious offer of a ride, saying he preferred to walk by the side of the waggon, one son and a hired man following in the wake. The rest of the people dispersed, some going one way and some another, their voices carrying far in the still evening air.

Byfield was silent, and Maguire, having accomplished what he set out to accomplish, seemed to have no further desire to speak. Ben and Jim had got out of the democrat and were walking together close behind it, talking to each other in whispers.

"What are we to do to get back the licence and secure possession of our belongings again? The more I see of this fellow the less I like him, and I don't propose to be

dragged through life after him in this manner," said Ben.

The practical minded Jim replied:

" I'm content to be dragged in his wake until we have something to eat and a night's rest. He seems to be heading in the direction of those two requisites with a directness that arouses my admiration. To-morrow, with the help of some of the farm hands and a few of the neighbours, we will drag the licence from him if he won't give it up peaceably. I rather imagine that the reason he doesn't want to room with us is because he fears we will regain possession of it while he is asleep."

" I shouldn't wonder."

" Well, we'll tackle the question and him to-morrow when we're fresh."

The procession turned through an open gateway into an ample farmyard, walled in on three sides by a group of buildings comprising barns, stables, drivehouses and sheds. The hired man, who had evinced a warm admiration of Maguire's oratorical gifts, assisted expertly at the unhitching of the horse.

The house, a short distance from the barns, was, like them, of wood, and although it needed a coat of paint was nevertheless a homelike and comfortable-looking structure, shaded by clustering locust trees. A well with a board roof over it, having underneath the roof a roller round which was coiled many turns of rope that testified to the depth of the excavation, was situated near the rear of the house. One end of the rope was attached to a full bucket that rested on the ledge. Maguire lifted the bucket to his lips and took a long, satisfying drink, refreshing on a warm night.

There was not a light visible in the house, and the party went round to the back and entered the kitchen. Here the son had lighted a candle, and had occupied the time the others spent at the stables in setting out bread, butter, a pitcher of milk and some corned beef. The silent farmer made no complaint that the pedlar and his two comrades did not do ample justice to the fare thus spread before them.

CHAPTER III

"LET ME BUY YOUR FRIENDLY HELP"

BEN and Jim thought Farmer Byfield rather a quiet, reserved man the evening they first met him, but they laboured under no such delusion next morning. The farmer's voice rang through the house in vibrant tones that rendered all further sleep impossible, as indeed was the intention.

"Get up; get up," he cried. "What's the matter with you? Want to lie in bed all day? Think it's Sunday, I s'pose, and here it's half-past four if it's a minute, and no one to feed the horses yet. Say, Sam, d'you hear?"

"Oh, I hear all right enough," growled Sam, the eldest son, sleepily. "Nobody could help hearing if he was alive, and within a mile of the house."

"Get up, then. Ought t'have been out long ago. Looks like rain too; thought last night it did."

"No such luck," murmured the hired man. But they all got up nevertheless, yawning industriously.

The farmer had put time forward when he said it was half-past four. It was not so late in the day, and there was still time to do a good morning's work. Every clock in the house was deliberately set from half to three-quarters of an hour fast, and for some occult reason they were always kept thus far in the future, although they deceived nobody. Byfield had been afoot for some time and had already set the fire going in the kitchen stove before calling the others. A successful farmer differs from the Centurion of Scripture in that he says "come" instead of "go."

The first to appear was not one of those called so vociferously, but a strikingly handsome and healthy young girl of about eighteen, her large eyes lustrous and dewy

with sleep. Her father had placed the kettle on the stove, where it was already singing, and the girl, hardly yet awake, set herself to the preparation of the ample and early breakfast. Presently, in the broad pan, were frying the disks of potato sliced from those boiled the day before, simmering and browning, of delicious odour, a scent for a hungry man to sniff appetisingly in the keen, cool air of the morning. From another pan the no less tempt-some aroma of frying ham mingled with that of the bub-bling coffee in the capacious tin coffee-pot, set back on the top of the stove near the oven. Lottie was spread-ing the tablecloth when her brother came in, rubbing his eyes.

" Hello, Lot," was his greeting, " we raked in three young men for you last night—two in the loft and one out in the barn. You pays your money and takes your choice."

" You keep quiet," answered the girl; " it's time you were out at the stables. Breakfast will be ready before you have the horses fed."

" It won't be ready sooner'n I am, and as for the horses, what does a fellow keep a father for? I tell you, Lot, that fellow out in the barn can talk. You ought to hear him; just like a streak. I guess his tongue is hung on a swivel."

" Who is he? Another hired man? "

" No, I guess they're all three pedlars. The fellow out-side's got a horse and rig you wouldn't give ten cents for."

Lottie gave expression to an impatient ejaculation of contempt. A hired man was a poor enough creature in her estimation, but he was a prince to a pedlar. The hired man had passed through the kitchen while brother and sister were talking together, and had gone quietly out. Ben and Jim now appeared, and gave a cordial " good-morning " to the pair, which was returned with warmth, at least by Sam.

" If you fellows want to wash," said Sam, as if it were a custom the observance of which might be open to con-scientious objection, " there's a tin basin out on the stoop, and water in the rain barrel under the eaves-trough."

Lottie seemed barely to cast a glance at the young men, but there was an unmistakable air of town about them that swiftly mitigated her previous disdainful classification of them as pedlars. While they were conversing with her brother she went quietly to the stoop, whisked away the soiled towel that hung on a peg under the veranda and substituted a clean one.

"I wonder if your friend is up yet, and if he has given his horse a feed. The nag looked as if he needed one badly last night."

"The horse is ours, not his," said Ben.

"That so? I thought he owned the whole outfit."

"He talks as if he owned the earth," put in Jim.

"Oh, isn't he a friend of yours?"

"We never saw him till last evening. We've been trying to do a little in the peddling line—mighty little it was, too—during the last few weeks, and this man came on us while we were resting near Ann Arbor. He hadn't any—"

"Still we don't know anything against him," interrupted the conscientious Ben, who, with a glance at his companion, intimated that perhaps it was just as well not to talk too freely in the presence of strangers, a hint which Jim accepted in silence.

"Of course," continued Ben, "we don't know anything much in his favour either. All I wanted to say was, that you are about as well acquainted with him as we are."

"Oh, I see. I thought you were all the one crowd."

"No, Ben and I are the one crowd. Mr. Maguire is the other," said Jim.

They were out on the stoop at the side of the kitchen, and the farm boy of twenty still lingered near them as they put the tin basin and the collected rain to their uses. There was little in their conversation that indicated a college training, yet there was an undefinable something that fascinated Sam and held him in bondage. He saw in them advance agents of the great and stirring world of which he knew little except by hearsay, and they presented to him all the mystery of things unknown, although

in point of fact they were probably quite as innocent and ignorant of the ways of the city as he. The farmer approached from the barn and interrupted the conference. "Say, Sam, where ye been all morning? Get a move on you and help the hired man."

Sam achieved the requisite motion, and the three walked together to the farm buildings some distance from the house, greeted in advance by the boisterous laughter of the hired man, which led Ben and Jim to the accurate conclusion that Maguire was up and holding some converse with the help.

"Hello, boys!" roared Maguire, when the three hove in sight. "This is a fine time in the morning to be getting astir. If I were paying you wages you would hear from me. This man and I and father having done all the chores, now you appear on the scene. I've fed Rosinante, and the grateful animal said to me, 'I suppose those two cusses are asleep yet.' A merciful man's merciful to his beast."

"Or even to some one else's beast," commented Jim.

"Quite so, quite so. The horse doesn't mind as long's somebody puts down the hay."

The hired man laughed heartily.

"Jest hear him talk! You'd think he'd been up fur hours, an' the square fact is I come durn near feeding him to the horses myself. He says I stuck the pitchfork in his leg as 'twas. I tell him I took him fur fodder 'cause he's so green," and this time the hired man was merry over his own wit.

"That's about right," admitted Maguire, "the only drawback in sleeping on a hay-mow is that some fool will come along before it's hardly light and try to jam you down the horse's manger before you're awake. Still, I suppose he thinks all flesh is grass and as all grass becomes hay by and by, he should therefore throw any tramp found in a mow down to the horses. Is that your idea?"

"Jest about it," chuckled the hired man.

"We would like to have a little talk with you privately," said Monro to Maguire.

"What! Before breakfast? Not likely. Business transacted at this office only during business hours. Call upon a man of business in hours of business, only on business, transact your business and go about your business, and give him time to attend to his business, or words to that effect. Eh, hired man? Isn't that right? That's my motto, and I'm giving it to 'em straight, as the old woman said."

"You bet," agreed the hired man.

When the morning's work about the barn was finished, they all went together to the house and in to breakfast. Here, for a wonder, Maguire was momentarily nonplussed, for he had not expected to see so pretty a girl at the table. The night's lodging in the hay had left on the young man many a particle to attest the nature of his bedding, and his hair was powdered with clover seed. It was one of Patrick's principles to make himself entirely at home wherever he was, and his method of doing this was to appear as much as possible like his host, so he had allowed the reminiscences of the hay-mow to remain on his person, a neglect which he regretted as soon as he saw before him the trim figure of the fair Lottie. The farmer was already seated at the head of the table heaping up liberal portions of the food provided on plate after plate. Each one sat down as he came in, without ceremony, throwing his hat in a corner or leaving it out on the stoop. Mrs. Byfield was busy pouring out the coffee, and a great pitcher of milk stood at her elbow with glasses round it should any prefer the fluid, cool from the cellar, to the beverage hot from the coffee-pot.

"Say!" cried the hilarious hired man to all and sundry, "he's a regular hayseed, ain't he? That's what I tell him. I guess you'd better send him out to the fields, Mr. Byfield, rather'n let him go 'lectioneering."

The farmer took no sort of notice, but attended diligently to the business at hand, the sooner to come at his own breakfast. A meal with him was not a thing to be enjoyed, but a necessary and regrettable function to be finished speedily, so that the real occupation of a man's life might go on with as little interruption as possible.

"I—I—I think I'll just have a brush up before sitting down," stammered Patrick, "if you'll excuse me for a moment."

"Better let me go over you with the currycomb," cried the hired man in great glee, receiving a malignant glance from the victim, which showed that the humour, such as it was, proved not so welcome as it had appeared to be in the barnyard.

Maguire had recovered his equanimity when he re-entered.

"My, ain't he pretty?" said the hired man, loth to give up his advantage.

"Now that's kind of ye," said Patrick, "for it's not a thing I'd have thought of saying about you from one year's end to the other. I'm a truthful man, de ye see? I'll take a glass of milk if ye please, Miss Byfield, it looks cool and temptsome to a thirsty person."

The girl coloured at being thus directly addressed as "Miss," and poured out the milk. There had been no introductions, but Pat saw at a glance that she was the daughter of the house, for, although one or more hired men were regarded as indispensable on the fields in the olden days, a hired girl was considered effete luxury in the house, as unnecessary as she was expensive. Aside from this, domestics were difficult to obtain, the girls, if inclined to "work out," preferring the higher wages, greater freedom and lighter duties of the city to the slavery of a farmhouse.

The hired man, suddenly silenced by the unexpected retort of the stranger, a retort to which he could find no effective reply—in fact a suitable answer did not occur to him till the following Sunday—applied himself diligently to the breakfast before him. Maguire, having cleared the way of an inconvenient interloper, easily kept the conversation within his own range, leaving no opening for embarrassing rejoinders or equally embarrassing silences.

"Mr. Byfield, I would like to have a talk with you about the coming contest, but I suppose you won't have very much time to spare after breakfast."

"I won't have any," replied the farmer with rural bluntness.

"That's what I thought," said Maguire, not giving the hired man time to chuckle. "All I want to know is where a list of the voters of this section can be had."

The farmer curtly gave him the information.

"Well, then, I'll drive over there and copy it. That won't take long. The next thing will be to have someone who knows the men tell me who are certain to vote for the ditch and who are certain to vote against it. I suppose you could do that this evening, Mr. Byfield?"

The farmer made no answer for some moments. Although hospitable to those he knew, he had no desire to burden himself with the board and lodging of strangers, and election day was still some distance ahead in the future. Here were three unknown men, with one horse, and to judge by the confident manner in which their spokesman mentioned his return, as if it were a settled fact, they must imagine the bounty of the farmhouse was boundless. And all this in the busiest time of the year, when everyone about the place was overworked, especially the women, whose already onerous tasks would be increased with every additional chair drawn up to the table. After all, why should these three project themselves on him rather than on any other resident of the neighbourhood? The clear morning light had dispelled the glamour of the night before, and the farmer could not imagine what possessed him when he let them come to his house as indefinite guests. Maguire watched him narrowly, as with contracted brows these thoughts percolated through his mind, and the young man seemed to guess their meaning intuitively, although he said nothing and waited for his answer.

"Well, I dun'no 'bout that," slowly said the farmer at last. "I thought that was what you were goin' to find out by peddling round the district."

"Yes, I'm going to peddle round the district to find out how the doubtful cases stand, but there's no use in my wasting time finding out what's already known. It won't take you five minutes to go over the list with me,

and I can tick off them that's this side or that side of the ditch, then I'll tackle the others. The doubtful fellows are my pizen."

"I don't know's I've got much interest in this 'lection anyhow," said the goaded farmer, to the astonishment of his family, who knew that he had. The hired man leered across the table at Maguire, and leaning over the fried potatoes said in a whisper to Sam, audible to the pedlar, "I guess somebody's goin' to get left on this deal."

"Oh, you ain't got much interest in it, ain't you?" remarked Maguire, affably enough, but with colour rising. "I understood last night that you had. Of course the trouble with you is that you ain't got the time to bother with it, 'specially right in the middle of harvest."

"That's it," replied the farmer, visibly relieved at finding his change of front thus accounted for.

"Why, that's all right," continued Maguire, nonchalantly. "A man tends to this sort of thing in cash or kind, as the saying is. Fellows that have time give time; fellows that have money give money. I'll get a good subscription out of you for the fund, and then I won't bother you again till election's over."

Byfield gasped, and for the first time during the meal stopped eating, staring incredulously at his guest.

"The fund? What fund?"

"Why, the election fund, of course. You don't expect to shoot quail without burning some powder, do you?"

"But you said last night you didn't want a cent. You said it to me when I suspected that there was some grab game at the bottom of all your talk. I'll leave it to any one who was there that you did. They all heard ye."

"Of course he did," chimed in the hired man, with ringing indignation in his voice. "You said to him, Mr. Byfield—I heerd ye myself—you says, 'Whatter you going to make out of this?' An' he says, 'I hain't a-goin' t' make anything. I'm goin' t' peddle.' Them's his very words. They wa'n't no talk of a fund then. That's what he said, didn't he, Sam?"

But Sam was watching the game and saying nothing. He felt in his bones that the stranger was more than a

match for all arrayed against him, and he thought the hired man would have been wiser if he had held his peace. The hired man, meeting no response from the father, for whom he was the champion, or the son to whom he had appealed, now turned to Ben and Jim.

"You were there. Didn't he say he wouldn't take a cent?"

"That was certainly my understanding of his remark," said Jim.

"There!" cried the hired man in triumph, thankful, in the circumstances, for small mercies. "There, what did I tell you?"

Maguire, who was no small eater, had helped himself to various dishes during the interval, and had thanked Lottie with ingratiating politeness for another glass of milk, again bringing the colour to the silent girl's cheeks by his frank, admiring gaze while he held forward his glass. He allowed a perceptible interval to pass before he spoke and then entirely ignored the energetic hired man, who now began to wish he had kept out of the discussion, scenting coming ignominy and defeat.

"You were quite correct, Mr. Byfield. I want nothing at all for myself. The fund isn't for me to draw on, not a bit of it, but to pay the just and reasonable expenses of the election. It's always necessary, if a side is to win. Whichever side has the most money is the one that counts the most votes these days."

"That doesn't sound very honest," put in Ben the incorruptible, speaking for the first time. The girl looked from one to the other in wonder. There was evidently a split in the visiting delegation, and she could not understand it. Nevertheless she was keenly interested in the discussion, sharing her brother's evident admiration for the young man who, with every one against him, held his own, serenely affable, and, besides, brought a softer note into his voice when he addressed her, which no one else had ever done.

"My dear fellow, you simply don't know what you're talking about. Where is the dishonesty in paying legitimate expenses? The shoe is on the other foot, I imagine,

Take, for instance, the necessary board bill. I believe in paying my way wherever I go, or whatever I am doing. Of course, it might be said that Mr. Byfield, possessing a large farm, well stocked and successfully cultivated, could quite easily support us while we were canvassing on his side of politics, but I say, why should he any more than the others? Now, I can't board round while I'm on this job, because I've got to give all my attention to the business in hand. I pay two dollars a week while I stay here, and I've been at two-dollar-a-day hotels where I wasn't so comfortable. I ought, by rights, if you talk of strict honesty, to pay at least a dollar a day here, but perhaps Mrs. Byfield will let me off for two dollars a week."

"Indeed," said the hospitable Mrs. Byfield, "you're not going to pay a cent while you stay here. It's not likely."

"We haven't come to keeping boarders," cried Lottie indignantly, for at this time people in the city never thought of spending their vacations on a farm. Byfield himself said nothing, but his eyes twinkled when his guest spoke of paying for his board. This was a horse of a different colour. Every little helps on a farm, where cash is sometimes scarce. Sam laughed under his breath very gently and winked across the table at his sister, who did not take this familiarity in good part, tossing her head slightly, with a very fetching little frown on her brow. Sam was beginning to see the way the game was running and became more and more confident that his estimate of the stranger had not been a false one.

"That's all right," said Maguire airily. "You see this here ditch is a public affair. And we all know what public improvements mean. There's so much estimated at first, and the job's about half done when that amount is spent. Then there's no use in letting it lie unfinished, so there's another appropriation and nobody to blame, and that's the way it goes. It isn't so much the first cost of this here dreen or the second cost, although these will pile up the taxes for the next ten years; it's the repairs year by year, the banks caving in where the deep cuttings are, the silting up other places, the sweeping away of

the bridges with the first spring freshet and all that sort of thing. Why, what's a quarter each or half a dollar from the taxpayer to stop the beginning of this dreen, a dreen fur cash as well as for water? What's fifty cents apiece when the taxes in the first year would be ten times as much? No, sir; none of this fund goes into *my* pocket, but I think it's only fair and just that some of it should go into Mr. Byfield's pocket if he boards the men who are going to defeat this thing. That's how I look at it. You can't have fried eggs without breaking the shells, and talking of fried eggs I think I'll have one more, Mrs. Byfield. I admit I like good cooking, and that's the reason I want to stay here, where I'm well off. Thanks, Mrs. Byfield."

"We don't want any fund to pay our board bill," said Ben. "We have nothing to do with this election, and are going away this morning."

"Right you are," confirmed Maguire, cheerfully. "There speaks the free and independent pedlar. That's correct. Pay as you go is my motto. Of course, if you don't electioneer it isn't to be expected that you should ask for your board bill to be paid out of the fund. So if you boys fork out seventy-five cents each after breakfast I should say that would clear you cheaply enough, for you have had more than the worth of it."

Ben reddened, remembering that he had no money, and well aware that Maguire knew it; but Jim spoke up confidently:

"Cash or kind, Maguire, as you said a little while ago. If we haven't the ready money we have the goods, so don't get anxious on our account, or afraid that we will appeal to your generosity."

"Then," continued Maguire, ignoring the last remark, "there will have to be a little something in hand to help the doubtful voters to see the right side of this question. What does it cost in this section to make a man vote our way?"

"You can have my vote for fifty cents," said the hired man, anxious to retrieve his lost position as a humourist.

" That would be half a dollar more than it was worth, for I've known men take good money and give bad votes. I'm a commercial man, and I only buy where I'm sure of the delivery of the goods."

The hired man heaved a sigh and shoved back his chair.

" It's nothing here but talk, talk, talk, and I'm a worker. I can't fool away any more time, even if I am working for somebody else. Talk's cheap."

There was a general shoving back of chairs as the industrious hired man refused to dawdle longer, and presently all hands left for the fields, with the exception of our three pedlars. Ben and Jim waited out in the barnyard for the third of the trio, who had remained at the house apparently to talk with the women. The two discussed, with a discouraged air, the nature of the goods that would be most acceptable to their host for the accommodation they had received.

" I suppose the mother would like something useful and the daughter something ornamental," said Jim, confessing at the same time that he knew little of feminine preference.

" I suppose so. We'd better take our stock up to the house and let them choose what they want."

As this was agreed to, they heard Patrick approach, whistling merrily.

" Well, gentlemen," he cried on seeing them, " we were to have a little confab, you said. Now that breakfast's over, I am ready to talk on any subject under the sun till next meal time."

" We haven't anything to discuss," said Ben, slowly. " All we want is our licence, and then we propose to pay up our bill and get on our way."

" Oh, the licence. Thunder, I thought we settled that last night. Do youse want to have a fight every morning over it? Why can't we have one good tussle that will last a week? I hate to think of waking up every morning and saying to myself there's that durned licence to be fought for after breakfast. I wonder which'll lick? I've simply got to have this licence till after election, for the

opposition will be sure to pounce on me for it; 'twould be bad politics not to, and some one is bound to think of it. You see, I've got to take to the peddling tack for a while at first, and they'd be dead certain to nab me before I got through. Say, boys, you must let me keep this paper for another week. I'm a peaceable man and don't want to be always fighting."

"We are not going to fight for it. The licence is ours. If you refuse to give it up, we won't say another word about it, but will go to the nearest justice of the peace and make complaint. Then we will either get it or not, as the law holds."

"How will you explain your hoodwinking of the law at Ann Arbor? I thought we thrashed all this out before. What's the use of going over the old ground?"

"We will tell the truth and take our chances."

Maguire saw that they meant it. He thrust his hands deep in his trousers pockets, and with bent head and a frown on his brow walked up and down before them for a few moments, seemingly meditating on the situation.

"Look here, boys," he said at last, "you've got me in a hole, and I know it, and you know it, so there's no use of me pretending that I'm up on the surface of the earth when I'm not. Your position is legal, and mine isn't, so there's where the trouble comes in. A man whose fix isn't according to law's no good, unless he's got money, and I ain't got enough. Now why can't you fellows be decent and jump in and help a fellow? I'll divide up square, so help me. Yes, I will—straight."

"You say you are going to work for nothing," said Jim, "so in that case there will be nothing to divide."

"Don't you make any mistake. There'll be something to divvy before this ditch question is settled. You can bet your boots on that."

"If my boots are safe on such a wager, then you've lied to these people, so how can you expect us to trust you?"

At the word "lied" Pat's eyes flashed dangerously and

his right fist clenched, but he seemed to pull himself in immediately after, and he replied smoothly enough:

"Oh, I never go back on a pal. Now, look here, you fellows, you're cramping me. You're not giving me a fair show; honour bright, you ain't. You can queer my game right here, and I don t see how I can help myself, if you shut down on me. Now, all I want to make is a living. These jays here will get the worth of their money, don't you fret. Why can't you be easy on a poor devil and not shove him in a corner merely because you've got the chance? You won't feel any better when you've done it. It won't do you a cent's worth of good, and it will do me a lot of harm. Now, see here, fellows. You are two friends, and you don't like me, I can see that. I like youse two, but that don't make any differ. We'll let it go at that. Youse have had a good schooling, and I haven't. I've got nothing to keep me but my ten fingers and about an ounce of brains to tell 'em what to do. You fellows ain't getting along very well in the world, but you've got an eddication, and you're chums with each other. I tell you, boys, to a lonely devil that never had a friend to say a good word for him since he was born that's a mighty lot. I've been watching you two, and I can see that youse'd stand by each other through thick and thin, and if one gits a licking the other'll take his share, and no squealing, and if one makes half a dollar the other gets a quarter. Now, I'd give anything to have a friend like that, and if I had to I'd kill the man that hurt him, an' don't you forget it."

"Look here, Mr. Maguire—" put in Ben.

"Pat's the name, or Patrick for short."

"Very well, then, Pat, I ask you to turn back your recollection to last evening. You were in a hole then, and a worse one than you are in now, for the law was right on your heels."

"True for you. Never a truer word spoken."

"Here were we two, who stood by you as staunchly as any friend could desire, although neither of us had ever seen you before. We got you out of the hole at some risk to ourselves, for you have threatened us once or

twice since with the consequences of what we did. Very well; how did you repay us? You jumped on us and knocked us down on the road and held us there because we asked back what was our own. A man who will act like that doesn't need to wonder why he hasn't any friends. That isn't the way to make 'em."

"By the holy smoke, Ben, you're just dead right. I'm a mean, low-down, insignificant cuss. There's a streak in me that ought to be kicked clean out of this here county. I know it, and I've said it to myself a dozen times. When a fellow comes up to me spitting on his hands I line out for his jaw without ever thinking any more of the consequences than I think about breathing. You see, you fellows sort of squared up to me last night, an' I forgot in a minute what you had done for me, so help me, I did. Mean? I'm so blamed mean that . . . But say! When you meet a fellow like me, what does the college say you ought to do with him? Give him another punch in the head, kick him down a bit further in the ditch and make him meaner than ever when he gets out, or say to him, as you said just now, encouraging like, 'Pat, you're a dirty God-forsaken whelp; why don't you brace up and quit being a thief or a sneak?' Then if there's any good in a fellow, talking soft and soothing like that to him will bring it out, and if there's not, if he's sneak and puppy clean through, why you've done what you could, haven't you? And you feel better after it."

While this appeal was being made, Jim turned his eyes from Maguire and gazed at his friend, a slight smile parting his lips. He knew the serious undercurrent of Ben's nature: his sensitive regard for his duty toward his neighbour. Whether it was blind luck, deep guile, or intuition that led the glib talker off on this line Monro was unable to guess, but he was well aware that nothing could be more effective so far as Ben was concerned, and he watched the result of the other's breathless words with amused interest.

"What do you want us to do?" said Ben in a low voice.

"I want you to help me. I want you to stand by me for a little while. You're thinking of peddling. Good enough. What better district to peddle in than right round here? It's just as good or just as bad as any other place. You can perhaps put in a word on the 'lectioneering, but you don't need to unless you like. I can tend to all that. I want you to let me have your horse and rig and the licence; I'll take good care of all three. I've got to scour round this county, and nobody here has got a horse to spare, and if he had he wouldn't lend it to me. These farmers think more of their horses than they do of their wives."

"You propose, then, that we lend you the horse and waggon and go on tramp ourselves?" said Jim. "Well, I call that cold cheek."

"Hold on, Jim," cried Ben, "wait a minute and perhaps we can make some arrangement. You've got a shoulder pack, Maguire?"

"Yes; but there's no need for you to walk. You come along with me in the rig. I ain't going to do any peddling. You see it will be like this. We come to a house, and you fellows can go in and sell things to the women. I'll have to tramp out to the back fields or wherever the farmer is and have a chat with him. That will give you lots of time to palaver the women. I guess that where you boys fail in peddling is in not flattering your customers. That's the secret of success in this world. Butter 'em, butter 'em. If you tend to that, the goods will sell themselves. I may be able to give you a hint or two as we go along, and if you intend sticking to the business you'll find my pointers worth listening to. Now, boys, you haven't been raising my courage just to throw me down again, have you? You ain't going back on me, are you?"

"What do you say, Jim?" Ben turned to his friend. "I don't want to be hard on anybody, and if you're willing to stay I am."

"You couldn't be hard on anybody if you tried, Ben. I'll do whatever you do, of course; but, see here, Maguire, you've been talking loud about money ever since we met

you. You seem to know how to make it and to despise us who don't. Why not buy our horse and rig, and we'll throw in the licence? We'll sell you the whole outfit for twenty dollars."

"So help me, boys, I was only blowing. I always blow about money. If people think you really need anything they won't give you a hand; if they think you're flush, then it's all right."

"What Ben has just said disproves that."

"Present company excepted, boys, always. I got two dollars out of that fresh inspector at Ann Arbor, and before that I had something less than five dollars. That's my pile, less than seven dollars, all told. Search me if you don't believe me. Then, there's the stuff in my kit, but that don't amount to much. I ain't no Vanderbilt in disguise, you know, though I may look like the family. But I'll tell you what I'll do. If you boys stand by me till this cruel war is over, I'll guarantee to give you twenty-five dollars for the mule and army waggon, and you can do what you darn please with the ammunition. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, we won't hold you to that, unless you want to keep to it yourself. I don't see where there's any twenty-five dollars to be made in this contest, but we won't desert until the votes are counted. After that, you understand, you are to let us have back what belongs to us, or else buy out the business."

"All right, Ben, signed, sealed and delivered, witness our hand, so help me. And you're white men, you two, clear through and away out beyond. I'll deal square with you, but you mustn't kick if I do some tall talk to other folks. Of course I'm not in this thing for my health, and if old Byfield or anyone else in this district thinks I am, that simply shows he wants to get something for nothing, which is against the rules of the peddling business. Nobody would ever be taken in in this world if it wasn't for their trying to bunco somebody else. The farming community always loses money thinking it is getting a lump of gold, and then they feel disappointed when they find it's only a brick. But we've had talk

enough, now let's get to work. We'll hitch up the team and spread ourselves over the cultivated lands. But I tell you, boys, I'll never forget that you are white men clear through and down to the ground, may I drop in my tracks if I do."

CHAPTER IV

"I HAVE FLATTERED A LADY"

It was three o'clock and the summer afternoon shimmered with a heat that seemed visible as it throbbed above the parched earth, therefore the blinds over the parlour windows were drawn to keep the room dark and cool. Lottie was neatly dressed any time of the day you happened to meet her, but in the afternoon, when a lull came in the day's work, she blossomed out almost equal to one of the coloured plates in Peterson's Magazine, which arrived from the cultured city of Philadelphia once a month and thus kept the farm informed of what the outside world was wearing. A complete living up to the gorgeousness of those fashion-plates was next to impossible, when the limited resources of the neighbourhood and the scanty amount of money at the girl's disposal were taken into consideration, but nevertheless the magazine had its influence, and the effect was perhaps more charming and certainly more subdued than if the instructions from these fascinating pages had been fully carried out. Of course Sunday was the real test of all this array, and then, perhaps, Peterson's was outdistanced, but every afternoon produced the picture of an amazingly pretty girl most admirably garmented—a spotless collar at the plump throat, surrounded by a dainty ribbon. She wore a light white muslin dress, through the semi-transparent sleeves of which could be just discerned a suggestion of rounded arm, all in all a cool, pretty and luringly lovable girl, kindly and sweet, living the healthy if arduous life of the farm, pure as a calla lily, with possibilities of character latent, needing only the vivifying touch of opportunity to begin their development, as the severing of a silken thread permits the wait-

ing ship on the ways of the building yard to glide into the expectant ocean. Lottie was an American girl, brought up in the same, refreshing moral atmosphere of the country, similar to thousands of others scattered up and down the length of the land, yet, notwithstanding this multitude, the young man of destiny, *her* man of destiny, when he arrives cannot be persuaded that there is such another in the whole world.

Coming from her room into the parlour Lottie heard the gate click, and, running to the front window, peered cautiously past the edge of the blind to learn who the visitor was. She saw Maguire come swinging up the walk, his chin in the air, his hat set back on his head, his whole appearance that of a man well satisfied with himself and contented with existence. She learned by the dust on his boots that he had come some distance on foot, and wondered what had happened to his two comrades with their horse and waggon. She drew back, fearing he might see her, and a moment later heard him enter the dining-room, pausing for an instant on the threshold when he found it tenantless. " He wants something to eat," said the girl to herself, and, hospitably intent, opened the door between parlour and dining-room.

" Ah, Miss Byfield," cried Maguire, doffing his hat, which he had not taken off on entering the house. " I thought at first there was nobody at home."

" There isn't except mother and myself, and she is resting. I suppose you haven't had your dinner? "

" Oh, yes, thank you, two of them; happened to strike the early lunch house and the late lunch house one after the other, and in the right order, too. I've done first-rate to-day in the matter of meals, and I hope my luck will keep up. But I know it won't. Some day I'll come on the late dinner house first, and, leaving before the horn is blown, reach the early meal house just when the dishes are cleared away. Dinner hours in the farming districts should be regulated by law, and then pedlars, tramps and canvassers wouldn't get left. Say, Miss Byfield, I collared that voter's list all right, took a copy of it, and now all I want is to get the names ticked off."

"Then you wish to see my father, don't you? He won't be back from the fields for some hours yet, but if you went out there—"

"No, he wouldn't like that, and then he's busy, and it's a pity to disturb him. I hate bothering a busy man. You know all these people on the list, don't you?"

"I know most of them; that is, I meet them at church on Sundays; some I know very well, others not so well, and the rest by name only."

"Well, now, Miss Byfield, if you wouldn't mind, maybe you could tell me the fellows likely to vote on our side, and the fellows against us. Then, you see, I wouldn't need to bother your father at all."

"I don't think I could do that, but I might be able to pick out the names of those who were at the meeting last night, and they are all going to vote with my father."

"Why, that's just the ticket; just what I want. You see, we will sort of hew this list out in the rough together, if you will be kind enough to help me, and then your father and I can put the finishing touches on it. It will save him a lot of trouble if you go over it first and give me some kind of idea where I stand."

"Well, I'll do what I can. Won't you come into the parlour?"

"Thanks. Don't mind if I do."

He threw his hat into a corner and followed the girl into the darkened room, she going to a window, pulling up the blind and letting in the light. She invited him to a seat at the circular table that stood in the centre of the room, covered with a dark brown cloth embroidered at the edges. In the centre of the table lay a huge family Bible, and on the top of that an almost equally huge photograph album, which gave evidence of having been in use rather more frequently than the volume that supported it. There were various other books scattered about the table, such as "Yowett on the Sheep," and one author in a still more uncomfortable attitude, "Quinby on the Bee." Lottie sat down opposite her visitor.

"If you will read the list," she said, "I will tell you those who were at the meeting."

Maguire, not too eagerly, pulled his copy from an inside pocket and smoothed it out on the table.

"I don't write a very good fist," he remarked, as he wrinkled his brow trying to make out the first name he had set down, "that's how I come to miss me deplomy at college, the professors saying that all the answers was splendid, but they couldn't read them for me handwrite." The young man looked across at her with a humourous twinkle in his eye which was answered by a sparkle in her own.

"I will write out the list for you if you like. You read the names to me."

"Oh, I don't want to bother you so much as that," he protested; but she sprang up, cleared a place on the table and quickly brought pens, ink and paper, saying, as she sat down again:

"There now. Go ahead."

Instead of going ahead as invited, or rather going ahead in another direction, Patrick, leaning his elbows on the table and his chin in his hands, gazed at the girl murmuring:

"I wish my name was on this list."

"I'll put it on, if you like. Why?"

"Oh, I dunno. This strikes me as the nicest neighbourhood I ever was in. I like the people so well. If I was on the voters' list I'd be living here, that's all."

"Then you think you won't have any trouble getting them to vote as you want them?"

"Oh, that will be no trouble at all, at all. You do be having a lot of fun here in the winter time, I'm thinking, when work's a bit slack."

"Yes, it's pretty lively sometimes, when the sleighing's good. Then we go for sleigh rides; sometimes we have singing school or husking bees, or paring bees . . ."

"Ah, that last is what would suit me. They do be pairing off at them bees."

"Paring off apple peelings, yes."

"Oh, it's apples they pare, is it? Sure I thought it was the boys and girls. Ah, well, trouble first come into this world on account of an apple, and it's but right—"

"That apples should keep on making trouble?"

"No, no. The very opposite is what I was going to say. It is but right that the apples should repair the damage. How is that for a joke? I did that all by myself."

"Beautiful. That's nearly as good as our hired man could do. But why don't you read out the names on the list, now that I'm all ready to copy them?"

"To tell the truth I've come to a complete stand at the very first name. And I don't know how to settle the question at all, at all."

"Can't you read it? Let me see."

"Oh, I can read it all right enough, but I was just wondering what the first name of his daughter was. It was one of the places I visited to-day, and the daughter was the prettiest girl I've seen in ten years' time and in the sixty-five years of my long life before that."

"Was that over at Spence's? Her name is Sarah, and they do say she's the best-looking girl in this part of Michigan."

"Then they're no judges of beauty. The name I head the list with is Mr. John Byfield."

"Very well. I've got that down. What's the next?"

"The next is the name of his daughter. That's what I wanted to know, so I might feel acquainted like."

"Oh!"

"My own name's Patrick," the young man went on hurriedly, fearing he had offended the girl by being somewhat precipitate on a very short acquaintance, "and the only objection I have to it is that it sounds Irish, which leads people to make mistakes, for there is nothing Irish about me at all, at all, except the trifling fact that I was born on the island, which should not be used as evidence against me, because I was so young at the time. I plead the minor act."

The young man's apprehension grew keen, as the girl made no reply. Her head was bent over the paper on which she scribbled in silence with apparent aimlessness. Was she offended? Had his question been impertinent? How do people in high society acquire knowledge of each other's names except by being told or asking honestly and

plainly for the information? He felt horribly at a disadvantage. If he had only asked the college boys that morning they might have given him a hint regarding the correct method of procedure, but he had anticipated no such predicament as this. It was the white dress that had done it, with the pink ribbon at the throat and the gleam of fair plump arms through the thin muslin. He had a susceptible heart, and the crisis had been unexpected. What should he do now? Wait for her to speak? What if she did not speak, but rose suddenly and left him sitting there, with no chance of making amends? Should he apologise? That seemed about the only thing to do, but for once the words failed him. The deadlock had come so suddenly. A moment ago they were talking amicably together, and now there was silence and a bent head.

The demure Miss Lottie dared not raise her head until her tumultuous thoughts adjusted themselves and she had determined what was the proper thing to do in the circumstances. Was this, then, the advent of a beau? The coming of the beau was a standard subject for discussion and comment among the girls of her acquaintance, mingled with accusation, indignant denial at first, usually followed by proof indisputable, such as the walking home from church together in the sight of all the world and then reluctant admission when the facts were too plainly demonstrable to be further successfully disputed. Some girls, indeed, flaunted the acquired beau defiantly from the very first, but as a general rule it was good form to disclaim strenuously and then admit blushingly, with a considerable interval between the two conditions. The new possession of a beau involved teasing by a girl's companions, and voluble comments, which were gratifying or painful according to the callousness or sensitiveness of the victim.

But besides this material world around her Lottie was also the inhabitant of another sphere. Peterson's Magazine dealt in fiction as well as fashion, and the girl remembered with a sudden palpitation at her throat that on the question of the name, many of the matrimonial

cases in that delightful, alluring, imaginative world turned. "May I call you Gladys?" the young earl would say as they rode together through the woods or along the winding avenues of the ancestral park, and the nobleman usually reached forward and touched the white hand of Lady Gladys as it rested like a snowflake on the horse's mane. Sometimes the fateful question was asked as the pair strolled along the margin of a romantic stream; sometimes on a balcony overlooking a silent city street, while the music of an orchestra mingled with the sound of dancing feet in the ballroom from which they had just stolen away; sometimes on a shipwrecked vessel, or in a dangerous position in the high mountains; but whenever or wherever it happened it always denoted a crisis in the lives of two young people, and much depended on the lady's reply. Fiction, in this respect, differed from the actualities of life, for in the country, everybody called everybody else by his or her Christian name, and no importance was attached to the doing so. In truth, when Maguire himself had addressed the girl as "Miss Byfield," the unusual ceremony of the appellation had brought the colour to her cheeks, and she feared her brother might notice the incident, to make it the after foundation of rallying remark. Finally she looked up at the young man opposite her and said with the glimmer of a smile on her warm lips:

"The first name on the list is John Byfield. What is the next? I have written down the one you gave me."

"Ah, ye've written down more than that, for I've been watching ye," cried Patrick, jubilantly, overjoyed to see that she had not taken offence as he had for a moment feared. "Ye've written the name Charlotte three or four times, and a mighty pretty name it is, and ye've written down Lottie a dozen times, and I like that even better than the other."

"You shouldn't watch people when they're writing," reproved the demure Lottie; "it isn't manners."

"When one writes as nice as you—I wish I could do it half so well—it's a sin not to watch and take lessons. I'm always trying to improve my mind, de ye see?"

" You should go to a writing school some winter and improve your hand. Improving the mind doesn't improve the writing."

" If you were the teacher at the writing school I'd go summer and winter."

" Oh, would you? I'm afraid, then, your penmanship will never be mended, for I shall never be a school-teacher."

" Ye might take private pupils, and, sure, you would find me a docile one."

" Are you fond of reading? " asked Lottie, hurriedly and somewhat inconsequently, the stories in Peterson's still running in her mind, although none recurred that offered any guidance in the present situation.

" Not of reading books. They're trash, and there's no use wasting time over them. But I like to read men and women. There's something worth your money, and yet it costs nothing. I'm afraid that's as Irish as me name, for if it cost nothing how can it be worth any money? But what I mean is, that there's some interest in the project, for a man says one thing when he's thinking another, and although he doesn't want you to know what he's thinking yet he always gives you a clew in spite of himself, just as I could read what you were writing on that sheet of paper, although the writing was upside down to me. Then, ye see, if you put together what a man says and what he thinks—"

" What you think he thinks," interrupted and corrected Lottie.

" True for ye. And that's just the point that makes the whole thing a puzzle and gives interest to the game, what you think he thinks, and then form your own conclusions about what's really in his mind, you can play with him and turn him the way you want him to go, while he believes all the time he is going the way he intended from the very first. It has all the merit and the amusement of driving a contrary pig to market."

" But what good does it do? "

" The pig? Ye sell him when you get there."

"No, the men. You can't sell a man as you would a pig."

"I'm not so sure of that. The world's wide, and I haven't had time to see very much of it yet, but I'll see more before I'm through with it, and it'll see more of me. I don't just know what's to be done, but this is a rich country and it's going to be richer, and it owes a good living to Patrick Maguire. He's going to collect that living if he can, and that's what he's practising now. I'm at the writing school, but what I'm going to do with the trick when I've learnt it I'm not just sure. If you know how to get men to do what ye want there's money in it, and I'll bet my hat on that."

"You are learning how to control men. Are you going to do the same with women?"

"I want to understand all men and one woman. That's my ambition, and I'm thinking perhaps the one woman will be more hard to learn than all the men. Ye see I haven't practised with the sex yet."

"I suppose you are very confident you will succeed."

"Indeed and I am not. It's a project I know nothing about at all, at all, but I have hopes that some kind young lady will learn me. Ye see, on account of my own bashful and retiring nature, I may not be able to do myself justice when it comes to the point."

"I don't think you need trouble yourself about that. People will never notice your lack of conceit if you don't tell them."

Lottie smiled, and the young man laughed aloud. The girl was rather pleased with herself, finding she was able to keep up her part of a conversation almost as if the dialogue had been a selection from a book. It was true that the heroes of romances were usually persons of the most refined education, whose opinions on literature, where expressed, were invariably of a nature extremely flattering to that art; still Mr. Maguire was merely a first attempt, and he was certainly very amusing. Perhaps she would yet meet one of those who talked in rounded periods, and this present encounter would at least be good practice for what was to come. Thinking of the

discourse as a preliminary training brought the next question to her lips.

"You are taking part in this election then, not because you have any interest in it, but merely as practice in getting to know how to deal with people?"

"Oh, I have the deepest interest in it while it's going on, for I do want to see whether I'm any good or whether me name's Dennis."

"How are you going to get them to do what you want them to? I'd like to know."

"What do you want to know for? Sure you don't need to learn a thing like that, because everybody would want to do what you asked them anyhow, and be pleased to get the chance. Try me, for instance, if you don't believe it."

"Yes, but that's not telling."

"Well, ye see, it's like the old poem, 'Many men of many minds, many fish of many kinds. Many—' I forget the rest. You treat each one according to his nature, and that's what I say a man must be able to find out, if his name's not to be Mud. I'm fully certain of this, that you must smooth people down if ye want to get along with them. Flattery is not distasteful to any man, if you mix it according to his liking and apply it with some judition."

"I thought it was only women who were silly enough to want flattery."

"Now, there you're wrong entirely. Flattery is the very last thing I would dare try with a woman. She would see through it in a minute and so would have a poor opinion of me, and once ye lose a woman's good opinion you're nowhere at all with her. No, I always tell a woman the exact truth, for she don't like to think you're deluding her. And even the truth itself one must deal sparingly with, for fear she might not be pleased with too bold a handling of it; for take ourselves here, friendly like, I would not presume to say half what I thought. I might say that never in all my life had I met a young lady it was such a pleasure to talk with, but I

would carefully conceal that she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen as well."

"O dear," cried Lottie blushing and jumping to her feet, "after that I must get about my work. It's later than I thought."

"Now sit down again, Miss Lottie," he pleaded persuasively. "You see you just prove what I was saying. Imagine what the result would be if I ventured away from the truth and tried flattery, if, indeed, it would be possible to flatter you, which it is not, for anything any man could say would be short of the truth. Won't you, then, forgive the half I said as well as the half I hid? You know you promised to help me with this list."

The girl stood irresolute for a moment, then sat once more.

"Time is getting on," she said warningly.

"Yes, bad luck to it. It always gallops when you want it to walk, and walks when you want it to gallop, like an ill-trained horse."

"Oh, by the way, where is your own horse all this time?"

"I lent it to the boys to do some peddling with. You see I didn't want it while I was copying the list, and told them to take it and go on with them, and I'd walk."

"I'm sure that was very kind of you. I hope they'll make some money, although this isn't a very good district for pedlars."

"Money is the last thing they'll make now or any other time. They're college-bred chaps, and they'll never amount to anything."

"Don't you believe in colleges then?"

"I do not. You lose all the years you spend there, and what money it costs you, and then come out not able to meet the world at all, at all. What they learn there is nonsense and no use at all outside, and I'm sure I don't know what good it is inside the colleges either."

"What do they teach, besides reading and writing and all that?"

"I'll never tell you, for I don't know."

"Then how do you know whether it's useless or not?"

"Now you have me there sure enough. My eyes were that dazzled looking at you that I tumbled into the trap without seeing it. Oh, yes, yes, the list. True enough, we mustn't forget the list, and I'm coming to it in one moment."

The girl had risen again, and a voice came from an inner room.

"Lottie, isn't it time to be looking after the tea?"

"Yes, mother," she replied, "I am going this moment."

"Please don't go just yet awhile. It's quite early."

"I must go now."

"Well, I'm wid ye then. Isn't there anything I can do to help you?"

"I've helped you so much with the list, haven't I?"

"Indeed ye've done more than that, Miss Lottie, you've spoken kindly words to a poor fellow that hasn't many friends in this world, and words that he'll remember all his life."

"I didn't know anything I said was so important as all that;" but here again she experienced a thrill almost equal to the reading of a fascinating romance, for it might be coincidence or it might not—he said he never read these immortal works—yet it was undoubted that in most of them the slightest words of the heroine had a life-extending effect on the well-being of the hero. The two walked out into the kitchen together, he carefully closing the door behind them to give a greater effect of being alone.

"Isn't there anything I can do to help? Wood to chop, a fire to light, or water to carry?"

"No, thank you. But you might go out to the fields and walk back with my father when he returns. Then you would have a chance of talking over the voters."

Patrick was quick to see that she did not desire her father and brother to come home and find them there together.

"I'll do it," he said, "this very moment. But I want another talk with you. There are lots of things I didn't have a chance to mention this afternoon. Won't you come out to the front gate after supper?"

The girl shook her head.

"Please come if you can slip away. I'll be out there anyhow, and if you don't come I'll be thinking of what you told me."

"You'd better get to the fields, if you want to have a talk with my father about the voters' list."

"Will you come to the gate to-night?"

"No, I won't."

"Why?"

"Because I don't go out to the gate even with my friends, and it's not likely I'm going with a stranger."

"I'd forgotten I was a stranger," said the young man in a doleful voice. Then with a semi-comical air of throwing a load of sorrow from his mind he looked up at her, a twinkle in his eye, and added:

"I am not as much of a stranger now as I was this morning, am I?"

"I don't suppose you are."

"Then it's wearing off gradually. Will ye be in the parlour to-morrow afternoon?"

"Perhaps."

"Then I'm off to the fields at once, and here's hoping to-morrow will come quickly."

From the kitchen window she saw him disappear down the lane that led to the back of the farm.

CHAPTER V

"DOING NOTHING FOR A BRIBE"

FOR the next few days Maguire was the busiest man in the state of Michigan. He went about his work with great cheerfulness, hail-fellow-well-met with everyone, a good story to tell where a story was appreciated, as was the case nearly everywhere, yet equally ready to talk serious politics with those of an argumentative turn of mind. If ridiculed, as he often was for working in a contest that did not concern him, he took everything said with the utmost equanimity, often returning as good as he received in the way of banter, but always with a spice of kindliness that left no sting in a hard-hitting retort. Yet no matter how distant a part of the district he was canvassing he managed to return every afternoon to the farm parlour, "trying to wear down the feeling of being a stranger entirely," as he said.

When a week had passed he announced to farmer Byfield that they must call a meeting of the anti-ditchers at the schoolhouse. "I know everybody in the district and want to be sure, if possible, that we get none of the opposition there. The other side is working hard, but they're working quietly. We must get up a fund, or we're a beaten crowd. I'll give the word round, and invite only the right people who are in earnest against the ditch."

On the night of the meeting the audience gathered slowly and casually, as if they did not expect it would do any particular good or harm, but that anyhow they might as well be there to see what was going to happen. When at length the schoolroom was nearly filled and Maguire with energetic effort had persuaded those who were lingering round the gate and gossiping to come inside, pushing down those contentedly sitting on the fence, Byfield

was unanimously voted into the chair, and the meeting was called to order.

"I don't know just exactly what we're here for," said the chairman in non-committal fashion; "but I guess it's to hear what the canvasser's got to say, and if he's got anything to say now's his chance."

This could scarcely be called an enthusiastic introduction, but Maguire stepped forward as briskly as if it had been a most flattering eulogy of his oratorical powers.

"Gentlemen," began the speaker, "I've been riding and tramping round this neighbourhood for over a week and have had a good time and have met a lot of nice people that I didn't know before, and they've met me, so we're even on that score. I've had a meal at most of your houses, and never had so much that was good to eat before, so that's where I'm ahead. Now, I've called this meeting to let you know just how the case stands. Boys, we're licked!"

"That's encouraging." "You didn't need to call a meeting to tell us that. We'd a found it out soon enough," came cries from different parts of the room, amid general laughter.

"Yes, you'd have found it out the day after the voting, but I thought it was a pity to keep you waiting that long. People these days like to get news as soon as they can. I've got this thing down fine, and if the polling was to take place to-morrow we'd be snowed under by six votes."

"Not much of a snow-under," was someone's comment.

"No, but a majority of one against you is as good as a northern Michigan blizzard. The taxes will be just as heavy for the next ten years as if the majority was a thousand. But there isn't any need to let it go at this. A contest's never won or lost till the last vote's counted."

"Yes, it is. It's lost or won when the last vote's dropped in the ballot box, some little time before the counting ends."

The self-evident truth of this interruption brought forth cheers.

"You've got me there," admitted Maguire good-na-

turedly, "and perhaps the case is really decided some little time before even the last man puts in his paper. But what I wanted to say was that while there's life there's hope, or to put it to suit the times, while there's cash there's hope. Now there's between twelve and fifteen votes in this district that's against us to-night, but not very strongly against us. I have reason to know that the other side is putting up a little of the spondulix, wherever it's coming from. That's the reason there's six votes against us. They're doing it on the cheap and on a very narrow margin, but they think it's enough, and so it is, unless we go them a little better, but now if we put up a little pile and keep quiet about it till polling day comes, they won't get suspicious until it's too late to do anything. They don't think I'm working this racket, and even if they did I don't suppose they'd be afraid of anything I could do. I tell 'em I'm a pedlar, and that's the truth. They ask me what interest I have in this thing, and I tell 'em that I like to see a fight, on general principles."

"We could tell 'em bettern that," cried a farmer in the audience. "You're interested in getting up an election stake purse. That's what you're interested in. I saw it coming this while back and suspicioned what this meeting was called for, but you don't get a cent out of me, ditch or no ditch."

There was a murmur of approval which welcomed the sentiments of this outspoken man, and the tide seemed setting in against the industrious Maguire. A subscription is never popular, and these rural residents had a keen scent for a beggar.

"You said last meeting," continued the objector, "that organisation would be enough, and said you didn't want no cash. I'll leave it to the chairman if you didn't, for he asked you."

The chairman made no response, but sat there glum and uncomfortable, thinking he was going to lose the week's boarding money, as, indeed, he had long since suspected would be the case. Maguire put on a look of injured innocence that was seraphic to behold.

"There was a man in New York that made a bet he would go to one of the country fairs that fall and peddle genuine ten-dollar bills for ten cents each, and the bet was that he would get no takers among the farmers, although the three-card-monte sharp would be driving a roaring business. Well, he got a lot of brand new crisp suspicious looking bills outen the bank, each one as good as the United States that backed them, and sure enough he never got an offer, till a policeman came and ran him in on charge of trying to pass counterfeit money. Next day when the farmers found out that the money was genuine, they was all a-kicking themselves, but then it was too late. Now I'm peddling ten-dollar bills to-night and offering 'em at ten cents and this man in the corner says, 'You don't get a cent out er me.' P'raps I don't, but neither did the other fellow that was peddling the real bills. Now the ten-dollar bills I'm offering you to-night are not in my pockets, but in yours. They're the bills that will come out year after year, as you're paying taxes on this ditch. And then there's another thing that I want you to pay attention to. This here business—"

"Just wait a minute, Mr. Maguire, and let me speak. We all admit that we don't want to pay taxes on this ditch. There's no use wasting talk on that subject, but I take it that what my friend in the corner means, and what we all mean, is that we're not such jays as to get up a fund for some stranger to spend as he likes and give us whatever account he pleases of the blowing in of the money. I'm not saying that the money wouldn't be properly spent, but some might think there was a leak, and I don't see how we could prove there wasn't."

"Now that's the way I like to hear a man talk," cried Maguire, enthusiasm and admiration for free speech beaming from his countenance. "You see, some of you folks are going off at half-cock. You're shooting off your mouths before giving me a chance to tell you what I'm at. There's a right and a wrong way of doing everything, and I'm going to show you the right way of going about this affair, and so far as wanting any money you subscribe to leak into my pocket, what little

money I've got is going to leak the other way." The speaker pulled from his purse a dollar bill, and waving it in the air slapped it down on the teacher's desk with a resounding crack of his knuckles on the board, in front of the chairman. "Money talks, as the old woman said when she kept tavern," he continued in a loud voice, "and nowhere does it talk more to the point than at an election. There's my dollar, and it's just as good a dollar as any man's dollar in this crowd. I head the subscription list: 'Patrick Maguire, Es-quire, one dollar!' Now, how am I going to prevent this dollar that I have earned going into some pocket where it doesn't belong? How am I going to be sure that this here bill goes to keep down taxation in this district? I'll tell you how, and it's as easy as rolling off a log. You appoint right here and now a finance committee of three members or more or less, and see that you put in men you can trust; men that can't be fooled by me or any other man. Can such men be found in this meeting? Well, I should smile! It would be an insult to the honesty and intelligence of the community if any one here said they couldn't. Now the subscriptions will be paid in to this committee and paid out by this committee. They'll look over every item before it is paid and see that it is right before they settle it. If any man can get money that doesn't belong to him from three hard-headed, common-sense farmers, why, hang it, he has a right to it, that's all I've got to say. I know I haven't brains enough to try it on. And now while I'm on my legs, anyhow, here's a funny thing I'd like to call your attention to. You seem to have got it in your heads that a man can't have an interest in a contest unless there's boodle in it for him. I've been asked a hundred times if I've been asked once, 'Whatter you going to make out of this thing?' Can't a man have an interest in a norse-race without having a bet on? Can't a man have an interest in a presidential election without expecting to be made secretary of the treasury? Why, there's not a man in this room but has spent time and shouted himself hoarse and helped put up a liberty pole and tore around promiscus when he wasn't making a

cent or standing in to get the office of pound-master, just because he had an interest in the way things were running, and knew durned well he wasn't going to make a cent by it. Well, that's the way with me about this here ditch. It doesn't matter a red cent to me which way the thing goes, but I tell you, gentlemen, I don't like to get licked, even if it was only my pup in a dog fight, and that's what's the matter with me. Now, gentlemen, appoint your finance committee."

The eloquent Maguire, with a wave of his hand that seemed to shift all responsibility from his shoulders to the shoulders of the meeting, took his seat, and for a few moments there was silence; then a buzz of whispers; finally the previous objector arose and said:

"I think the last speaker has talked like a man, and has spoken straight from the shoulder, as one might say, and I agree with him that if he can get the money from the committee's pocket into his own he deserves it, and we deserve to lose it. I move that Mr. Byfield, our present chairman, be appointed chairman of the finance committee, and that he nominate two others to assist him."

"I second the motion." "Seconded, seconded," came from all parts of the hall.

"Gentlemen, I'd ruther have nothing to do with it," protested Byfield, half rising. "Mr. Maguire is staying at my place, and so I think it would be better all round to have some outsider. I don't want the job." There were cries of "Go it, Byfield." "Don't back out." "Put the motion." "Moved and seconded." But Byfield sat there shaking his head, until the man who made the motion got on his feet again.

"There's something in what Mr. Byfield says. I'd forgotten that Mr. Maguire was staying at his house, and of course it wouldn't be pleasant to have to keep watch on a guest, for when all's said and done, that's what our action amounts to. For my part I would be perfectly willing to trust Mr. Maguire, for he talks the way I like to hear a man talk, but we want to satisfy everybody, and simply because I believe in him I want to see the game carried on according to his own proposal, which

strikes me as perfectly fair to himself and everybody else and leaves no chance for saying 'I told you so' after the thing's over. Now, who was it made the first objection? I think it was you, Mr. Slade, over in the corner. All right; Mr. Slade nods his head. Very well, I move that Mr. Jonas Slade be finance committee all by himself, or call him secretary and treasurer if you like. I've just been thinking that committees are rather cumbersome affairs, and it will be difficult in these busy times to get three men together very often, while if Mr. Maguire has to visit them separately that will take a lot of time and also no decisions will be arrived at, for one man will say he's willing to do what the other two agree to, and so we won't have any end to the running back and forward, and we will have divided responsibility, if there is a dispute later about the disposal of the cash. A will say he never agreed to this or that, and B will say he thought that was what A and C wanted, and so there we will be in the dangdest muddle, everybody blaming someone else. I know how it is, because I've served on committees myself and mighty thankless work it is. Now we all know Mr. Slade, and we know that if any man wants a dollar outen him he didn't earn he has to get up pretty early in the morning."

There was laughter at this, in which Slade himself joined. He was evidently proud of his reputation, and his character appeared to be well understood by his neighbours.

"Therefore I move that Mr. Slade be appointed to take charge of whatever money is collected and see that it is properly disbursed."

The motion being as vociferously seconded as the other the chairman put it, and it was carried unanimously.

"Now, gentlemen," said Maguire, stepping forward to the desk as cheerfully and briskly as if everything was going his way, "you've done exactly the right thing, and after hearing the reasons for one man rather than three or five I have to admit that the mover's plan is better than mine. I've put my own name at the head of this list because I subscribed a dollar, but I'm quite ready to

put it below any name that has bigger figures opposite it. I think I see five dollars in Mr. Slade's eye because of the handsome unanimous vote he got. Come up to the captain's office and settle, Mr. Slade."

But the cautious Slade contented himself with putting down another dollar, being ashamed to make it less, although he cursed the generous stranger in his heart and wished someone had started the list with twenty-five cents. Others objected that they had no money with them; but Maguire said all they had to do was to put down the sum they wished to subscribe, and he would be only too pleased to call round for the money and pay it in to the treasurer. So, once the ball started to roll, none escaped, although few put down a larger amount than Maguire. All in all, there was given and promised the sum of fifty-seven dollars before the meeting broke up and its members went home.

During the next few days Maguire saw much of Slade, for he industriously collected all the outstanding money and brought it to the treasurer bit by bit until the full amount was coralled in the latter's safe-keeping. The farmer always greeted the energetic young man with a cunning, knowing leer, as much as to say: "You haven't got any of this cash yet." But Maguire displayed no anxiety about the money, never mentioned it, in fact, except to say once or twice that he did not think it would be enough, and that if he found it failed to bridge the chasm he proposed to return it to the subscribers, as Slade had the list, for there was no use in throwing good money away uselessly, a sentiment with which Mr. Slade cordially agreed. Slade experienced some difficulty in understanding this frank open-hearted young man who worked without ceasing in what he was beginning to regard as a lost cause, and who never even hinted that he would like something on account.

Early on the morning before polling day Maguire arrived at the Slade homestead just as the farmer was about to set out for the fields with his men. He did not seem too well pleased at the incursion of a visitor at such an important moment.

"I've got this thing coppered at last, Mr. Slade!" cried the young man, in high feather. "I've got it all down fine, but I tell you it has cost a lot of work, although now we are sure to win."

"Yes? Well, that's all right," said the farmer, without enthusiasm.

"Now, I've got to have a talk with you right away," persisted Maguire.

"Couldn't you come back in the evening? I'm busy now."

"I know it; but I've got to have you in the evening, too, and I called round so that there would be no hitch about that. It's important. You'd better tell your hired men what to do, if they don't know already, and come into the house with me for ten minutes."

"Can't you walk out to the fields with me, and talk as we go along?"

"Well, now, Mr. Slade, I've tried to save you all the bother I could about this whole affair; but to-morrow the polling takes place, and I've got to have a talk with you right now."

"If you want any money, I give you fair warning that I won't part with a cent except for accounts shown and receipts taken. And if you want to see me for anything else, you can talk to me as well going to the fields as in the house."

"Why, of course; that's the arrangement and that's right. I can't be hired to touch a dollar of the money. and you can bet your boots on that. You were nominated and elected unanimously to handle this cash, and, what's more, you accepted. It was because I didn't intend to have anything to do with the fund that I proposed a committee, for you mustn't forget that the reason you were appointed was because I proposed it. You have had a wrong idea about what I wanted done all along. I saw that, but it didn't matter to me, and I said nothing. You couldn't hire me to handle the money."

"Oh, of course not," sneered the farmer.

"I'd do anything to oblige a friend, Mr. Slade, or almost anything, and you know it, for I've taken the whole

burden of this thing so that you wouldn't have any trouble, but now it's come to the point where *you* must act; you must do what you were 'lected to do."

"And what was that?"

"Why, see that the money goes where it was intended to go, of course, which is where it will do the most good."

"Well, I'm ready."

"Of course you are. I knew you wouldn't take a job and funk out at the last minute, leaving all your friends in the lurch."

"Oh, I've never done that and don't intend to begin now."

"Bully for you. You know some of the fellows have been saying to me, 'Slade'll back out when it comes to the pinch,' but I told 'em they didn't know what they were talking about."

"Who said that?"

"I'll tell you after the voting, but come into the house now, for there is a lot to do."

The farmer reluctantly gave some orders to the men who were waiting for him on the wagon, and they drove off to their work. Then he conducted the canvasser into the house.

"Now," said Maguire, cheerfully, "we can talk without anyone overhearing us, and that's something these times. I've got a list of eleven men who will vote our way—for a little consideration. That will give us all the majority we want to-morrow. I've promised 'em five dollars apiece."

"Five dollars apiece! Why, jumping ginger, you can buy the whole state for that."

"No, you can't. And, what's more, if the other side get an inkling of this, they'll see our rise and go us one better. The only reason we can do it for this money is that the other side thinks there's no work being done by us. I've let on I was peddling, and they're watching Byfield and you and some of the rest. They see you working away in your fields and not taking much interest in the thing, so they think they're safe. It will cost you twice as much, or three or four times, if they get a hint

of what's going on, and it's a blessing for us that the voting's to-morrow, for we couldn't have kept things quiet much longer. As it is, two of this eleven knew of the money subscribed at the meeting and wanted more; but I told them no one was getting more than five dollars and they ain't, either."

"Five dollars! Why did you make such a bargain before telling me?"

"I didn't make any bargain. You will have the last say-so about it. If you can get them any cheaper, all right, but you'll risk everything. They'll be able to get ten dollars each to-morrow if they get the slightest hint how things are going."

"Well, then, what do you say I'm to do?"

"I want you to take the list and pay the men. I think the best plan will be to take this money that's all in quarters and half dollars and greasy bills in to town and get them changed for new five-dollar bills, then you can slip one out of your vest pocket without any one knowing what's being done."

"I don't see the need of all that trouble. We can make this money into piles of five dollars each, or count it out right there."

"Well, just as you like. The other way would be safer, for there would be no marked bills among it. Old hands at this sort of business always handle new money."

"What for?"

"They seem to think it's the best way. But of course you do it any plan that suits you."

"Where's your list of the eleven men?"

"I've got it right here in my pocket, but before I show it to you I've promised these men that I'd take your word of honour that you would never breathe a word about it to a living soul."

"Why, what's all this fuss about a simple little matter?"

"That's exactly what I told 'em, but you know what men are when they're just a little scared. I said to them, says I, 'Why, Slade will never whisper a word, as much for his own safety as for yours.'"

"My safety?"

"Of course. That's what I said. 'It's six of one and half a dozen of the other. It isn't likely a sensible man like Slade is going to put himself into a box merely to make things unpleasant for you.' I told 'em that all right enough, but they made me say I'd get you to promise."

"I don't know what the devil you're talking about," exclaimed the farmer, staring across the table in bewilderment at his visitor, while his visitor looked with equal bewilderment at him.

"Talking about? I'm talking about buying votes for five dollars each."

"Well, what of it?"

"Nothing, except that it's bribery, and a state-prison offence in Michigan. I tell you a man can't be too careful monkeying with that sort of business, and some of these men know it. I guess they've been there before."

"What? In state prison?"

"No. In the bribery business, but of course they know the law on the subject. Still, it's all serene enough if a man goes the right way about it, and I told them they were as safe as a church. 'You don't need to be afraid of Mr. Slade's saying anything, I says to 'em, 'because if you were to get up and shout that Slade give you five dollars for your vote, he'd have to deny it in self-defence.'"

"But I never undertook to bribe men."

"Why, yes, you did, Mr. Slade. What else was the money got together for? There weren't no other expenses. I told 'em at the first meeting that they were defeated if they didn't get the men on the fence to come down on our side. Well, how were you to get them down if you didn't use money? There ain't no other expenses except that in this campaign, and everybody knows there ain't. That's why the second meeting was called. I wanted a committee chosen because I didn't want to handle this money for buying votes. That's why old Byfield refused. That's why they didn't get the other two men on the committee; they knew it was safer the fewer there was in it, and I saw that the minute it was proposed, and said so."

Slade, with jaw dropped and plain consternation written on his face, looked steadily across the table at the earnest talker. In a general way he knew that bribery was contrary to law, but never before had the matter been brought home to him in this direct way. After every election and during the contests accusations of bribery and corruption were hurled indiscriminately by one party at the other, and the papers were full of the subject, until the crime was so familiar to him that he looked on it as a matter of course and never connected its commission with the interior of a prison.

"I don't know as I ever heard of anyone going to jail for buying a vote," he said at last.

"Why, no. That's just what I've been a-telling 'em. You don't hear of it once in a blue moon, and you wouldn't then if people weren't so fond of babbling. A man that takes care and keeps quiet is all right nine times out of ten. That's what I told old Byfield when we were going home from the meeting. 'You needn't a been scared,' I said to him, 'you'd a-come through all right,' and he says to me, 'Why didn't *you* take it? Why was *you* so mighty anxious to get a committee appointed?' 'Oh, well,' I says to him, ''twasn't on that account; I simply wanted one of yourselves to handle the money and see that it was spent right,' and then he laughed. You know that mean little laugh of his."

"See here," said Slade with emphasis, bringing his fist down on the table, "all this money's going back to them that subscribed it."

Maguire's eyes opened wide and a slight sarcastic smile parted his lips. He gazed at the troubled farmer with an expression partly merriment, partly curiosity.

"Say, that would tickle old Byfield more'n anything that's happened in a year. It 'ud be better than a horse to him. That's just what he said you'd do, but the man that moved you claimed that if you did chuck up the job it 'ud be in plenty time to appoint somebody else; but two or three more agreed that you'd do it the very last minute, and the man that moved you said: 'Well, if he does, it's "good-bye, John," for him at any election in this district.'"

"This money's going back all the same," the farmer repeated, but with less certainty in his tones than before.

"What excuse are you going to make?"

"Excuse? Why, I'll tell 'em truth, that I didn't undertake to bribe people and break the law. I'll tell 'em I'm a law-abiding citizen, that's what I'll tell 'em. I'd like to see any of 'em censure me for standing by the laws of my country."

"Oh, they wouldn't none of 'em do *that*. No, they'd take back their money all right enough, and they'd laugh to beat the band. There'd be lots of fun over it for a few years; but I suppose by and by it 'ud be forgotten, unless you ever ran for office, and then some one 'ud be sure to remember it. You see, Mr. Slade, to give back the money is simply out of the question, because you must then either admit you're a coward or a fool, as the old woman said. Half'll believe the one and half t'other. They'll all want to know why you didn't let some other fellow tackle the job—why you didn't refuse as Byfield did—shrewd old fellow, Byfield is—he's a lot deeper'n I thought, for I expected him to take it, but of course with other two helping him to share the risk or the blame. Well, as I was saying, them that believe you didn't know will think you were a fool, and the rest will think you just got skunked at the last. Why, look here, Mr. Slade, there ain't a bit of danger in going right on as we intended to do from the first. I'll go with you, but I won't go into the houses. I won't see the money paid, so there ain't no witnesses, except the man you pay it to, and he won't squeal unless somebody makes it worth his while to turn state's evidence, which ain't a likely thing to happen."

"What's the matter with me staying outdoors and you paying the money inside, if it's so safe as all that?"

Slade looked cunningly at Maguire, and as this method of settling the difficulty had never occurred to the young man he wrinkled his brow thoughtfully and turned his eyes upward toward the ceiling, as if by meditation he might accustom himself to the novelty of an unexpected proposal. Then, with a sigh, he shook his head.

"No, that wouldn't do. I told the men you would hand them the money, and if I were to pay them they might think there was some shenanigan about it. No, you're the treasurer. The meeting appointed you, and this is the only thing you'll have to do, for I've done all the rest. Not that I'm afraid at all, because as I told you there's no real danger if everyone buttons his lip and keeps his mouth shut. The men won't care as long as they get the money."

Slade spoke more eagerly, "Let's see the list."

Maguire handed him a paper, and he scrutinised it minutely.

"Yes, you've struck the right crowd. I know that gang, and a gallous lot they are. They'd vote against their grandmothers for a dollar."

"Well, if you think I've offered them too much, you can beat 'em down while I'm waiting outside."

"No, no. That's all right. But say, Maguire, I'm pretty busy, and I've lost a good deal of time sitting and talking here when I ought to be out in the fields; so I don't see how I can go round with you this afternoon; sure pop I don't. Now, you'll write me a receipt for fifty-five dollars and I'll hand you the money. You tell 'em that you thought it was better not to have too many in this business, and so's you had made all the arrangements you had come round to pay them the money. I suppose you couldn't get a receipt out of each one of 'em, not to show round much, you know, but just to have everything businesslike?"

"Well, I don't think they would be such fools as to do a thing like that. Still, you can never tell. This is a mighty queer neighbourhood, and, anyhow, it would do no more harm if you would ask them when you give them the boodle."

"You can bet your boots I ain't going to give 'em no boodle. I told you I hain't got no time to go around and see all them people."

"It won't take you so very long."

"But you've got all day to do it in, and you've got a horse, and I hain't got a horse to spare; not just now.

I'll take your receipt for the money all right enough, and you make it out for 'necessary 'lection expenses,' and I guess they won't be no questions asked if we have a majority agin the ditch."

"We'll have a majority, if the money's put where people expect it to be put; if we haven't, I'll guarantee to pay it all back out of my own pocket."

"Well, now, would you object to putting that down in writing, that you give this guarantee, and then with that and the receipt I guess no one can blame me."

"Why you seem to be taking it for granted that I'm going to pay this money to the men."

"Well, you promised to."

"When?"

"Not five minutes ago; at least, you said as much as you would. What's the use of talking of a guarantee if you didn't mean to pay the men?"

"Oh, well, all right; have it your way. I ain't got no farm to lose; but I've got my liberty, and I expect you to keep mighty quiet about this here deal."

"Of course I'll keep quiet; besides, I won't see you pay the money, as you said a while since, so you're as safe as you claimed I was."

"That's so. Well, you make out receipt and guarantee to suit yourself, and I'll sign 'em. You're the durndest sharpest business man I ever see, and I give you my word, although I hain't got nothing against you personally, I wouldn't care to have any more money dealings with you. You're too sharp for a youngster like me, for you've got me to promise to do a thing I was bound to have someone else in this district do. I didn't care much who it was, as long's it wa'n't me."

Mr. Slade chuckled softly to himself as he wrote out the necessary documents that would protect him if his fellows ever called him to strict account over the expenditure of the money. "Oh, we'll see you through all right, young fellow," he said.

"I hope so," replied Maguire, in a tone of deep despondency.

CHAPTER VI

"HIS DISHONESTY APPEARS"

IT was still early morning when Maguire left the Slade homestead to make his way along the side road to his boarding-place. The young politician was in some anxiety regarding his breakfast, fearing he might miss a meal between the houses; breakfast is important to a person in good health. The cool, early air was inspiriting as well as appetising. As Patrick marched down the road, whose thick layer of dust was dampened on the surface by the dew of the night, he left tracks behind him as if he walked through snow, yet the powdered earth did not rise in a cloud around him as it would later in the day. He sang cheerily:

> I have fifteen dollars in my inside pocket;
> Do you moind.

Which musical statement, in the circumstances, was an underestimate of the case. He had actually fifty-five dollars in his trousers pocket at the moment, and he was determined that the bulk of it should stay there. All in all, the young man was pleased with himself, and as the day was still in its infancy, superb as far as it had gone, his voice rang out merrily over the fields and was echoed back to him from remaining clumps of the ancient forest that had once covered the land.

Arriving at the Byfield farm, he found, as he expected, that the breakfast dishes had been cleared away; but with typical American rural hospitality a plate had been left for him on the table and his breakfast was kept warm in the oven. Lottie was alone in the dining-room and Patrick was not without hope that she was waiting for him, as they had had many interviews since their first,

and were on a basis of friendship, although she had not yet foregathered with him at the gate in the evening as he desired. He hungered for his breakfast, and also for the grateful applause which he felt was his due as a man of parts who had succeeded in getting other men to follow his wishes. The desire for praise, or at least for commendation, is almost universal in the breast of man, and the woman who understands this establishes easy dominion over him. Thus have women without beauty or youth or any of those qualities that are supposed to fascinate ruled empires, while stupid historians, being mere men, have marvelled, unable to account for the power these women wielded.

"We thought you were lost," said Lottie. "You surely weren't electioneering so early in the morning."

"No, Lottie, I wasn't—at least I was electioneering for myself, and I got elected every time. I was over at old Slade's and wanted to catch him before he went out to the fields, which I just did and no mistake. Caught him every way you put it. They said at the meeting that any one who got money out of old Slade would have to get up early in the morning, so I got up early."

"And got the money?"

"You bet. Look-a-there!" Maguire, with a gesture of justifiable pride, pulled from his pocket a handful of bills and coins and flung the accumulation on the table.

"My!" exclaimed the girl, eyes opening wide, "what a lot of it."

"Yes-sir-ee. Fifty-five dollars to a cent. Not bad for a week and a half's work, is it?"

"Is that the money they raised at the meeting?"

"Yah. All but two dollars, and I expect to have that out of Slade before to-morrow night. Say! You ought t'heard the way I read the riot act to old Slade! Oh, it was as good as a picnic, and his eyes simply bulged, and he actually got pale at times, and yet I clean forgot some of the best things I was going to say to him. And now I tell you," he continued with great heartiness, selecting ten of the tattered bills, "I want your mother to take ten dollars for my keep while I've been earning of this pile,

and here's the boodle." He waved the money over towards her, but she shrank back from contact with it.

" But it isn't yours," she gasped breathlessly.

" It isn't *all* mine, but a good share of it is. You trust P. Maguire for that."

" I thought it was collected for election expenses."

" Cert. That's right. I'm the biggest election expense this part of the country's got, and I'm going to win for them as well as myself. Oh, I'm giving 'em value for their cash, you bet. There's nothing mean about me."

" I—I—I'm afraid I don't understand. I thought you said you weren't going to take anything—that you were doing all this for nothing, and that's what everybody else thinks."

" Well, now, look here, Lottie; you're a sensible girl; you don't think I am in this for my health, do you?"

" Then why didn't you say so at first?"

The young man looked at her from his half-eaten breakfast, an expression of amazed injured innocence on his face. The trend of her questions and the tone of her voice bewildered him. Was it possible that she was not going to perceive and admire his financial skill?

" Say so at first? Why, thunder! I wouldn't have got a cent if I did. *You* know that."

" Well, I don't know much about these things, but it doesn't strike me as honest to keep for yourself what was intended for something else."

" Oh, I see what you mean. Why, there's just where you are mistaken, Lottie. Honesty's my strong point. I say if a man isn't honest his name's Mud, and it ought to be. ' Honesty's the best policy ' 's my motto. Of course I've lost money by it, but I'd rather have a clear conscience than a wad of five-dollar bills. I am just going to tell you all about it, and then you'll understand. You see, I said I didn't want any pay, and I don't. I'll pay myself, every time, and don't you forget it. I don't want anybody else lying awake nights worrying about how Pat Maguire's going to come out of a deal. That's my department, and I look after it every time. Yes-sir-ee. But you think I'm hogging this money to myself and not

giving value received. That's where you're away off. It's straight as a string, bargain and sale, cash down, money paid, got the tin, signed, sealed and delivered, witness my hand, and everybody satisfied, 'specially P. Maguire, Esquire. It's just like this. I don't charge 'em nothing for my valuable services, nary a red. But I make a little on a deal, as we all do. I buy eleven votes for one dollar apiece, market price, no dickering, cash paid, goods delivered and no questions asked. Them votes is mine, but I've no particular use for 'em. I'm buying to sell again, same's any respectable merchant.

"All right; I look round for a market, I charge five dollars apiece for my stock, and it can't be bought cheaper, for I've got a corner on the market. All right; money is turned over, and to-morrow I turn over the goods. Everybody's satisfied, and the goose hangs high. What could be honester than that? Honest! Well I should smile! That's just my weak point. Why, what would a dishonest man have done? He would have pocketed the whole fifty-five dollars, jumped his board bill, skipped by the light of the moon, and it would have been 'good-bye, John.' Nobody could have said a durned word, except your father for me boarding free. Yes, sir, I could have come right back here and nobody dared've put a hand on me, for they know what the money's subscribed for. But I'm an honest man, and I'm losing just twenty-one dollars by it; there's eleven dollars for the voters and ten dollars for my board bill. I'm not such a fool as to say 'honesty's the best policy' when you lose twenty-one dollars by it, but that's me every time. I'm a square man, I am, and I give you notice, Lottie, I'm coming back to this here district, and I want to come back with a clean conscience and have people glad to see me. I'm not jumping no board bills this trip. No, sir."

During this enunciation of principle there was, at times, a suggestion of pathos in the tones of the speaker's voice, alternating with the reverberation of that earnest indignation which comes upon a man unjustly censured. Few of us submit patiently to the accusation of the lack of some quality on whose possession we pride ourselves.

"You have no right to the money," persisted the girl with a woman's perverse ignoring of the inevitableness of logic.

"Then who has?"

"I don't know. It should be used as it was intended to be used, and if there is any left over that should be given back to those who subscribed it."

"Well of all the— Now, if that doesn't beat the Dutch! That gets me right where I live! Used as was intended? My stars, if it is and the government finds it out, then them that subscribed will go to state prison where they belong. Used as—my land o' Goshen—to buy votes! To bribe hard-working men to vote against their consciences, so that the schemes of these plotters will come out all right! And me—here I've been a-working like a dozen niggers for nearly two weeks, neglecting my own business, and now it don't none of it belong to me! I'm to tramp my half-soles off, talk till I need a carload of lozenges to get my throat smooth again, slave early and late, and then they're to say, 'We're much obliged, Maguire; you can go to grass now we're through with you.' And what those honest farmers want me to do, and expect me to do for nothing, is a crime against the law that men are put in jail for."

"Then you shouldn't do it."

"It's easy to say that, but what would they think of me going back on them at the last moment? I'd be a fine kind of a sneak, wouldn't I?"

"Better that than do wrong."

"But it isn't really wrong; it's against the law, that's all. It's done every day at every election in the country more or less, gen'lly more, I guess."

"That doesn't make it right. You should give back the money."

"What would your father say?"

"What could he say? I'm sure he didn't know the money was to be used to commit a crime."

"But I tell you people don't look at it that way. He doesn't, neither does any other sensible man. You've got to do this sort of thing or get beat."

"Well, let them get beaten. That doesn't matter, but the other does."

"I've gone too far now. I can't go back on them."

"If you have, then don't return here, either now or at any other time."

"Say, Lottie, you don't mean that. You're just angry, that's all. When you come to think over it you'll see how unreasonable you are."

The girl remained silent, and Maguire pushed back his chair and slowly gathered up the money that was on the table.

"Won't you give that ten dollars to your mother?"

Lottie shook her head; her eyes were moist, but she looked unflinchingly at him as if to read his ultimate purpose.

"All right, then; I'll give it to her myself."

"We ain't going to charge you anything for your board. I told you we didn't keep a boarding-house."

Lottie was determined to leave him no escape from doing what she thought was right. Maguire, with bent head, seemed to be marking time. He separated the silver from the paper somewhat aimlessly, and rolling up the bills slipped them into one pocket. He counted the silver once or twice, then shovelled it into another pocket. The ten single-dollar notes were still on the table, and he ran each through his fingers carefully, pulled himself together, raised his head suddenly, then said sharply:

"You won't take them?"

"No."

"All right."

He pulled out the roll he had placed in his pocket, the girl watching him intently, and selected a dollar bill from the wad which he placed with the ten dollars, making the total eleven dollars, the exact amount needed to bribe the free and independent electors, as the girl noted. These he put in a vest pocket, and the rest he returned to their former resting-place.

"Good-bye," he said, holding out his hand.

"Good-bye," she replied, with a catch in her voice, her

hands behind her back, as she had been taught to hold them at school, and there they remained.

Maguire paused a moment with outstretched hand untaken, then turned sharply on his heel and went out, closing the door with no gentle pull behind him, leaving the girl motionless in the centre of the room.

CHAPTER VII

"BUY 'EM TO SELL AGAIN."

IT is said that a man feels better just after breakfast than just before, but Maguire, on this occasion, was an exception to the rule. He had come to the farmhouse in a state of ecstatic admiration of himself; he was leaving it in a condition of mental gloom and depression that was the more bitter because of the injustice which caused it. It is disappointing enough to miss the appreciation a man knows to be his due, but to meet unreasoning censure when the appetite of expectation is whetted for merited commendation, arouses anger against the stupidity of our fellow-creatures. He liked the girl, too, better than any one he had ever met before; still, he said to himself, there were as good fish in the sea as had ever been taken out of it, and, business being business, he had no intention of letting anything she said interfere with his plans. If she chose to take an unpractical view of things, that was her lookout; such sentiments as she had expressed, besides being unjust, were no good in an everyday world. Still it was all very disheartening, and he could not rid his mind of the image of the girl standing there, resolute, her eyes unwavering, but brimming with unfallen tears.

Patrick harnessed the horse, cursing the straps, to the buckling of which he was unaccustomed, in bad humour with himself and the world, but now and then his hand touched the lump caused by the roll of bills in his pocket, and the undoubted presence of the money sent a little financial electric thrill through him that more and more began to compensate for the disadvantages that had followed its getting.

He sprang into the light waggon and drove away. It

would have served everybody right if he simply had kept on to the south until he crossed the state line into Ohio, letting them whistle for their money; but, being an honest man, he would adhere rigidly to his bargain. He would pay the money to the voters and be done with it; then he would buy horse and waggon as agreed, shake the dust of Michigan from the wheels and peddle his way to New York. Meditating thus, he jogged slowly along the dusty road until he heard coming up rapidly behind him the gentle purr of a buggy. Looking over his shoulder he saw a natty turn-out, driven by a well-dressed man. The sun glistened on the polished black box of the buggy as if it shone on glass, and the sand poured from the sparkling wheels as if it were water from the paddles of a steamer. The spokes glittered in the sunlight like a revolving firework. The cover of the buggy was laid flat aft, and a white net to keep off the flies covered the spirited, speedy horse. The whole combination was in striking contrast to the dilapidated belongings of Maguire, who turned to the side of the road to let the more rapid conveyance pass him, as was the courteous custom. The oncomer, however, did not pass, but casting a sharp glance at the man in the light waggon pulled up sharply.

"Your name Maguire?" he asked.

"That's what they call me."

"I've been looking for you this some time back."

"Yes? Well, I ain't very hard to find. Always at the office during business hours."

"Where's your office?"

"In this here waggon."

The stranger laughed. He was a smooth-faced, shrewd-looking man, whose age it was impossible to guess by looking at his keen face.

"You're taking quite an interest in this ditch contest, I'm told."

"Oh, so so. Just enough to make things a bit lively, you know."

"So I hear. What are you going to make out of it?"

"Well, now, stranger," drawled Maguire, throwing a leg over the edge of the seat, "I've been expecting that

question, and to speak right down friendly with you, not to have the secret go any further, I'm just a leetle tired of it. See?"

"Been asked it several times, eh? Well, I don't wonder. You're a stranger here, I understand."

"I *was* a stranger, but I guess there ain't anyone better known in the district than me to-day, and they'll know still more of me to-morrow."

"That so? Well, to come back to the question you don't like, what do you expect to make out of this?"

"I expect to make you folks sick, for one thing," said Maguire serenely.

"Why do you say 'you folks'? I haven't got anything to do with it."

"You wouldn't be here chinning me if you hadn't."

"I'm not a voter in this section."

"I dare say; neither am I, yet I've got this thing coppered all the samey."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"That's why I'm telling you."

"I'm not so sure of it even after you tell me."

"All right, then, drive on. You'll be sure of it to-morrow night. Good-bye; so long."

"Oh, there's no hurry. I'd like to have a little talk with you. Let's drive down the road to the woods, where there's some shade. It's going to be another powerful hot day."

"I don't know as there's much use us having a talk, but I can spend the time if you can. You drive on and I'll get there sooner or later. My horse is Kentucky blood, as you can see, but it's rather discouraged this while back, knowing what concerned fools there are on the other side of this here voting business."

The man in the buggy made no reply, but drove rapidly to the shade of the forest, Maguire following him more leisurely. Once together under the grateful shadow of the trees it seemed as if they two were alone in the world. The hot air quivered above the long, straight white road, and even the birds in the shadow were silent because of the increasing heat. From the distance came to their

ears the subdued, incessant chatter of a reaping machine in the fields, and now and then the clear whet-whet of a blade being sharpened by some farmer who was still using the ancient cradle for swinging down his standing grain.

"Now, to come back to first principles, what do you expect to make in this here campaign? I know this part of the country probably better than you do, and I'm willing to bet a dollar there isn't much money in it."

"No? That's a pretty nice rig you've got. Do you own it?"

"Yes. It doesn't look like a livery stable get-up, does it?"

"No. That's why I thought it was yours. You seem to be able to pick up a little something in this locality."

"Oh, I manage to make a living; yes."

"I'm in exactly the same business," said Maguire, nodding confidentially.

"Well, that's what I don't understand. How are you going to make a living on this tack? I know these men, and they are as close-fisted as the old Harry. They tell me that you're doing all this for nothing, and that they've got the thing fixed so that you can't make a cent unless you steal it from old Slade, and I'm just naturally interested to know how you're going to work it. I thought perhaps you could give me some valuable pointers."

"So I can, but as it happens this isn't my day I'm giving things away. Call round after the polling, and if you don't see what you want ask for it. No trouble to show goods. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Say, stranger, what are you driving at? Do you think there's anything to be made out of me by beating 'round the bush? If you do, you're fooling away your time. Look in my eye and tell me if you see any green there. You've asked me a whole lot of questions, and I've answered them like a gentleman. Now, let me ask you one. What's your game?"

The man in the buggy gazed intently at the other for a few seconds before he replied. Then he said quietly:

"I'm a contractor. I've got this ditch contract secured, if it goes through, and there's some little money to be made on the deal, although not any too much."

"I see. Then, why in thunder didn't you look after your fences a little better before this time of day?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I thought we had a sure thing, and so we had, if Maguire hadn't happened along. If I'd had a week's warning I could have knocked you sky high. I can do it yet, but being a contractor and having no vote in this district, I thought it would look better if I kept out of it. That's why I come to you."

"Could a-knocked me sky high, could you? I wish you'd come in a little sooner; we'd a-had some fun. I tell you what it is, contractor; it would cost you a thousand dollars to beat me now."

"Shucks, you don't know what you're talking about. But I don't want to beat you, I want to make terms with you. That's why I'm here, and that's why I ask you what you expect to make against me."

"You always say, 'expect to make.' Now, that's where you're on the wrong tack. I don't expect to make; I've made. Look at that. That's a roll of ten-dollar bills, and there's a hundred and fifty dollars in that wad. Here's another with not so much in it. That's going to the free and independents, where it will do the most good, but not the most good to a contractor. This other pocket jingles, but it's with silver, so we won't count that. All this boodle was in the possession of old Slade this morning; it's in my pocket now. Doing this thing for nothing? What's *your* opinion."

"I was told they only raised sixty or seventy dollars at the meeting."

"At the meeting!" cried Maguire, contemptuously, stuffing the bills he had exhibited into his pocket again, taking care that their small denominations were not visible to the keen eyes of his opponent. "Yes, there wa'n't much more than that raised at the *meeting;* but I've been round collecting ever since and have scared these people with the ten-years' taxation that's ahead of them, so they gave down. Oh, you bet, there's a lot of money to be raised round here if you go the right way about it."

"Still, even if you spend all that cash it would only take a couple of hundred dollars to beat you."

"Don't you make any mistake. You couldn't do it with a thousand, and I'd just like to see you try. Why, I'd raise the country. I'd say, 'Here's this contractor a-jumping in, spending a dollar to loot a hundred out of you.' Lord, it would be too dead easy to beat you! But I guess you're no such fool as to try it on, for you know it's always easier to buy one man than twenty, and cheaper, too. You said you wanted to make terms. Well, you've left it a little late, but still you're in time. If you've got any proposition to shove at me I'll listen to it. That's what I'm here for."

"Can you clear a hundred dollars?"

"Yes, and more."

"Well, you can't do better than a hundred and fifty. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll bet you two hundred against your hundred and fifty that this ditch is lost. If the polling goes for the ditch you pocket two hundred dollars and get back the money you staked."

"I'm not a betting man. 'Tain't moral. No, sir. In God we trust; all others cash. I ain't taking no risks, and I ain't doing no betting, being contrary to the way I was raised; a hundred and fifty in the pocket's better'n two hundred in an umpire's hands, with the hundred and fifty risked as well. That bluff won't work."

"There isn't any bluff about it. If you act square you get your money; if you don't you won't. Nothing could be fairer."

Maguire, with a deep sigh, gathered up the reins.

"Now, can there?" persisted the man, evidently getting a little anxious at the other's threatened withdrawal.

"O, that's too dead easy. You tie up my money till the voting's over; then you squeal and say betting's agin some state law, and where am I? I do hate to be taken for a fool. You'll dig that ditch the way the old woman kept tavern. Good-day."

"Hold on. No good of getting mad about it. I've made a proposition; if it don't suit you, then make an-

other. I'm willing to do anything fair, as long's my interests are protected."

"How you talk. Interests protected! You can't have interests protected in a case like this. You either trust me or you don't; I didn't go to you; you came to me. All right; I'm a square man, and I do what I say. If you don't know enough about a man to see that, after talking with him an hour, then put the bud on your horse and go home. No use in wasting my time."

"Well, then, make a proposal."

"All right, entirely on your account and to save hard feelings, I will. I'll trust you fifty dollars. You pay me a hundred and fifty cash down right here, and I'll call round at your place day after to-morrow and get the other fifty."

"You don't expect that I travel round with that much money on me?"

"If you don't, then you've lost your darned old ditch, that's all."

"What security have I that you won't take the money and still work against me?"

"None at all."

"Oh, that's not good enough."

"'Nuf sed. You refuse, then?"

"No sane man could do anything else but refuse such an offer from an entire stranger."

"I expected you to refuse, and that's why I made the offer. Men who get big contracts are the men who take just such big chances. You ain't no contractor; you're some contractor's clerk. You go back home, sonny, and tell your boss to come and see me, then we'll fix this thing up in ten minutes."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a hundred dollars down, and you come for the other hundred day after to-morrow."

"No; you just think you're going to do that. You're dreaming on account of the hot weather. Now, I'll tell you what you'll do, and you'll do it within the next ten minutes or not at all. You'll pay me plump down two hundred dollars, and then you'll get your ditch and no

questions asked. There's two men coming along the road, and they'll be here in less than half an hour. Now when they get on the top of the next rise you'll have taken or refused my offer, and you won't get another."

"But you made me a better offer a few minutes ago."

"Yes, and you didn't have the sense to take it, and durn me if I believe you're going to have the sense to take this one, which is exactly the same offer if you only knew it. I haven't raised the price a cent, for I'd a-had the fifty dollars that makes up the two hundred within forty-eight hours, or thereabouts."

"You're sure I would have paid it, then?"

"Certain. I can see in a minute you're square, and the only thing that eats me is that you haven't the gumption to see that I am."

"Then, if you trust me as you say, why do you object to wait a couple of days for your money?"

"Simply because this is an uncertain world. That horse may throw you out and break your neck on the way home, and then I couldn't collect. There's no such danger from my horse. But you take such a long time about a deal that you make me tired, and more than that you make me want to go right on with this contest and bust you wide open so that you'll have more sense next time you meet a gentleman and don't know it. I'd only lost fifty dollars by doing it, and I'd have more than the worth of that in fun. I don't even know your name, and don't want to; but I'd shout, mad clear through, to the free and independents that some man with a bay horse that had a white net over it, and a new covered buggy with the cover down, slick as a whistle, a smooth-faced man, who looked as if he was up to snuff and said he was a contractor, wanted to buy me for two hundred dollars so that he would have a free swing to make thousands out of the poor unfortunate taxpayer. I'll bet you they wouldn't be long in telling me the name of that man, and they'd believe all I said, too."

"I doubt if they would believe you refused the two hundred. If I take this offer, what are you going to do with that cash you have in your pocket?"

"I'll turn right round and give it back to old Slade, telling him my conscience will not allow me to corrupt the free and independent voters. He s scared already of the bribery act; that's how I got the money out of him, and I'll make him scareder by saying the other side is on the lookout to get some one in state's prison on this deal. Say, them two men's disappeared down the hollow, and they will be in sight in another minute or two."

"How about the voters you've bargained with?"

"Oh, them! That's dead easy. I'll go to each of them and tell 'em it was wrong of them to say they would take money, and that they're morally bound to vote against the ditch anyhow, without payment."

"*Against* the ditch?"

"Cert. That'll make 'em so durn mad, with losing the money and all, that they'll vote for it, just to throw me down. Nothing makes a man so fighting mad as to do the superior act with him and let on your conscience is a trifle better'n his'n; then if you go on a-pointing out to him the right path and imploring him to foller it, like a preacher at a revival meeting, why he'll knock you down if he dare, or vote agin you if you're bigger'n him."

"Well, I guess there's something in that," remarked the contractor, with a smile. "I'll accept your offer, Maguire, and I'll trust you." Saying this he took out a broad pocketbook from inside his coat, slipped an elastic band from it, displaying a flat heap of greenbacks, then counted the requisite number with care, slipping each bill between thumb and finger. He handed the result to Maguire, who also counted it over, found it correct, doubled it up and put it into a pocket as nonchalantly as if he completed such a transaction several times a day.

The man in the buggy gathered up his reins slowly, as if reluctant to go, being probably in some doubt regarding the wisdom of the loose and costly bargain he had made.

"I suppose you'll wait in the neighbourhood till after the polling?"

"No, I don't think so. I've got no more interest in

the affair, and have lost enough time on it already. I'm going east."

"What's your business?"

"I'm doing a little peddling at present, but I don't expect to keep at that long. Not enough money in it."

"Better call round and see me at Ypsilanti. I could perhaps put you on something that would be worth while."

"I guess New York's got more loose cash lying round than Ypsilanti."

"Shouldn't wonder. Yet it might be harder to pick up."

"That's what I want to find out."

"Well, good-bye."

"So long. See you later, maybe."

The man did not need to touch his horse with the whip; a slight chirrup, and the animal was off like a flash, the bright wheels twinkling in and out the bars of sunlight that crossed the road falling through the interstices of the forest, and in a very short time there was merely a little cloud of dust in the far distance to indicate the passing of the speculator.

Maguire sat complacently where he was, the unaspiring horse requiring no attention, content to remain uncomplaining in the shade as long as his master was willing. The young man turned his head in the opposite direction and watched the two approaching, whom he now recognised as Ben and Jim, tramping wearily together. He had seen little of them during the last ten days. They had adhered loyally to their compact, and now the time was come for the completing of the bargain. They had quite palpably avoided Maguire since the morning they made terms with him in the barnyard, keeping as much as possible to themselves and never using horse and waggon when he showed the slightest inclination of desiring them. He resented the aloofness on their part as indicating a belief in their own superiority over him, but he gave no hint of this feeling, speaking to them with the smoothness of oil during their infrequent and chance meetings. His umbrage increased as he watched them

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pause on seeing what was ahead of them, consult together for a moment, then, with the air of making the best of an unavoidable encounter, come slowly on. He awaited them with equanimity, resolved on that form of revenge which consists of burning the enemy's head with the hot coals of remorse.

CHAPTER VIII

"I AND MY PARTNER"

"WELL, boys, I'm mighty glad to see you. Say, isn't it hot! The truth is I've been waiting here in the shade trying to make up my mind on a little financial matter, and I don't seem to have any luck; for I guess, as I have told you before, I belong to the gutter, and whether any one shoves me back there or not I'm just like the hog that 'ud sooner wallow than climb out on the hard road. But three heads is better'n one, and so when I saw it was you I hung on till you came."

"What's the trouble?" asked Ben, sitting down with his companion in the shade of a great beech tree, whose level, thickly leaved branches extended far across the rail fence that formed the road boundary of the wood. "Isn't the polling going your way to-morrow?"

"Well, that's just the point," returned Patrick, springing down and seating himself near them, leaving the horse to his own devices. "That's just the point. If you ask me, I say I dunno. I guess it is, if I care to make it, but that's what I'd like to have a little advice about. You see, you fellows have given me the other side of the road ever since I took on this business, and so I don't just know who to talk to when I get in a corner."

"We've done what we agreed to," commented Jim.

"Certainly, and I'm ever so much obliged. I'm not making any complaint. Still, when all's said and done, a fellow would sometimes like a friendly word chucked in now and then, and perhaps it wouldn't hurt anybody."

"I believe in everybody minding his own business," added Jim decisively. "You are playing your game and we have no right to look over your hand."

"Are you just dead sure of that? I'm not. Seems to

me that what a fellow-creature does is everybody's business, more or less, for a man can't do most anything that doesn't have some effect on other people."

"You're right," cried the conscientious Ben. "How can we help you more than we've done?"

"Well, I'm not saying you can. I'm merely talking about this wouldn't-touch-you-with-a-ten-foot-pole kind of a way you look at me. You don't seem to say to yourselves, 'We've had a good education, and this fellow hasn't; perhaps there's some things he don't know that we might give him a pointer on.' See what I mean? Now, here am I. I asked you fellows to stand by me for a week or two, and you've done it, right down to the ground, and no mistake. Well, now it struck me like this, what right have I to interfere with those two fellows? They didn't want to wait, yet I made 'em."

"Oh, if that's all that's bothering you," said Ben frankly, "it doesn't need to worry you a moment longer. We said we'd stay, and we've done so. I don't know that our staying has been much of a success, but it's been about as big a success, I guess, as if we'd gone on. We've made enough to pay our board, and that's more than we were doing when you first met us, so you haven't anything to fret about on our account."

"All right, boys, you're white men, as I've always said, and I guess I'm a nigger, when you come to size me up. But I'll tell you now what was worrying me, and it's about this here election. But before we go on, there's one thing I would like to clear up, although perhaps you won't think any better of me for doing it. When I told you I had only seven dollars and couldn't buy the horse and waggon, I lied. You see, I wanted youse to stay, and so I told a whopper."

"That didn't do much harm," said Jim with a cynical laugh, "for we didn't believe you anyhow."

Ben looked reproachfully at his partner. Maguire's eyes narrowed down to slits, and his face reddened with anger. Still here was a lesson unconsciously given that confirmed his own ideas. One of the few truthful statements he had made had been received with incredulity,

so the vendible nature of Truth as a mercantile commodity was more than ever in doubt.

"I don't think you ought to say that," put in Ben, with some emphasis. "Or, at least, you should speak merely for yourself. I saw no reason to doubt the statement."

"Well, you see a reason for doubting it, now, Ben," cried Jim, impatiently. "A man's straight or he isn't. If he hasn't gone straight and intends to reform, he doesn't say much about what he's done, but he reforms, and there it ends."

"It all depends on the man, Jim. Because one man does a thing one way, that's not saying another man may not do it another way. There's the road to Ypsilanti, straight ahead, but I've no doubt you could reach the place if you cut through the fields. Go ahead, Maguire; what were you about to say?"

Maguire sighed deeply and continued in a doleful voice.

"Oh, I suppose Jim's right as a genn'l thing. I guess the average human man's a pretty tough critter when you size 'em up by and large. And I guess, too, I'm about the worst of the lot. Perhaps if I'd a-been brought up different I'd a-*been* different, but I dunno. We can't always sometimes most genn'ly tell, and it makes it worse for me to go on, because the next thing in my way is another lie, though very likely Jim didn't believe it at the time."

"Oh, go on, go on!" shouted Jim; "let's have 'em all. If it comes to that I suppose I could match lie for lie with you, but I'm not bragging about them. I'm not pretending to be any better than the next man, so in heaven's name go on and don't let us have too much talk about it, that's all."

"Now, Jim, you're hard on me, that's what you are, right down hard on me, still I've no call to complain. I deserve it all, and more. Well, when I told you I didn't intend to make anything on this deal, I was off again: for I did, and that's what I went into it for."

"You're mixing things up, Pat, which shows again that a liar should have a good memory. You didn't tell

us that, and if you had we wouldn't have believed you. You said you were going to make something and offered to share it, which offer we refused."

"Good enough; I'm not kicking. I told it to so many fellows that I thought I told it to you, too. Anyhow, here's how the land lies, and this is what is biting me. They raised fifty-seven dollars at the meeting to buy enough votes to knock out the ditch. I've got fifty-five of that fifty-seven right here in my pocket, and I've got eleven votes as soon as I pay a dollar apiece for them. Then I make forty-four dollars on the shuffle. That's what I intended to do from the first. When I was thinking hard how I was going to get hold of this money, I didn't think hard about whether the turn-over was honest or not. A month ago I wouldn't have had any doubts. Since then I've met you and some other white folks, so I drove right here into the shade and began to think about it. I've worked hard for these people, right in their busiest time, when they couldn't spare a day, and I couldn't have worked harder if I had been out in the fields with them. If I had been in the fields I would have earned and been paid my money. As it is I have no way of getting paid for what I've done except by bribing these people and breaking the law, so I'm in a box."

"It's a box very easy to get out of, and it shouldn't have taken you long to make up your mind, either," said Jim.

"Oh, yes; that's all right, Jim. Of course, if you took your shirt off we'd find a nice pair of sweet white wings hanging from your shoulder-blades, neatly folded so as not to bulge when you had your clothes on; but, as I told you, there ain't no white wings on me."

"No, nor flies, either."

"Maguire," interrupted Ben solemnly. "Jim doesn't mean to be as harsh as his words sound, and he's right when he says that it shouldn't have taken long to make up a man's mind on the point in question. It is a pity that you said you did not want anything for your work, for the laborer is worthy of his hire; but, having said so, you must stick to your word. If you do the right thing, and

give this money back to those who subscribed it, you will be amply rewarded for your present loss."

"You bet he will," said Jim, throwing himself back against the rail fence and laughing loudly. Maguire darted one malignant glance at him, and nervously clenched his fist, then recovered himself and assumed the seraphic expression with which he had listened to Ben's solemn assurances. There was more of chagrin than resentment on Ben's countenance at the callous behaviour of his friend. He turned sorrowfully to the man of the stricken conscience and saw nothing suspicious in his face.

"You must give the money back," he said kindly, but decisively.

"I'll do it, Ben," cried Maguire, fervently, "but you see the fix I'm in, although probably Jim doesn't. These men have trusted me, and if I throw them down now it's too late for them to do anything, and the voting will go against them. That's the point that worries me."

"What's your decision on that, umpire?" cried Jim, reclining with his clasped hands behind his head. "You must have some compassion on the deluded farmers. Maguire's conscience took so darned long to get into working order that you must confess it's pretty rough on them to have it begin skipping round the very day before the polling. It would have been a mighty sight more complimentary to us and the other white men who influenced Maguire for good, if our example had bitten, say, a week sooner; then the anti-ditchers would have had something of a show."

"They are not worth a moment's consideration," was the instant decision of the umpire. "They would have been compounding a felony, if this had gone on; so Mr. Maguire's honest determination, which I sincerely hope he'll stick to, will be actually doing them the greatest favour it is possible for him to bestow on them. In fact, if you take my advice, you will not pay back the money till to-morrow night, when it will be too late for anyone to put it to the purpose for which it was intended."

"Right you are, Ben; I'll do it just as you say. Now

you see what it is to have a clear-headed friend to help you steer a straight course. The minute you speak, why the thing is as plain as a stump fence, and now I don't wonder at Jim saying it took a long while to get my conscience in working order. Of course, it must seem so to youse, but I was brought up different. So, boys, that's settled and out of the way. Now, about this here rig. I said I'd give you twenty-five dollars for it. That 'ud be cheating you. It's worth thirty, and I'll give thirty."

"Oh no. Fair's fair. Twenty-five dollars it is, if you say so; but we don't want to hold you to a bargain made in a hurry, unless you want to be held."

"I've got to have an outfit of this sort, if I'm going to peddle clear through to New York, and I couldn't get one from the farmers round here at anything like the price, even though the horse wasn't any better. So it's a go at thirty. Your advice was cheap at five dollars."

Jim rose lazily, took the pack that he had been carrying on his shoulders and threw it into the waggon.

"As it is going to be a deal," he said, "there goes that accursed knapsack. If the soldiers hate to carry a shoulder burden as badly as I do, I pity them. Take the thirty, Ben; we'll need it."

"We'll take just what we agreed to take. Twenty-five's the figure."

"You may as well have the thirty," said Maguire; but he counted out twenty-five dollars and handed it to Ben, for the latter shook his head when the larger amount was mentioned.

All three were now on their feet, and Maguire held out his hand in a friendly manner, a manner met with the utmost cordiality by Ben, and with cool composure by Jim.

"Well, fellows, I suppose I'll see you to-night at the farm."

"I don't think so. We'll go back there right away, pay our bill and light out. We've had about enough of this part of the country."

"Where are you bound for?"

"I'm not just sure yet; depends on Jim. I want to get to Chicago, and then down further south in Illinois."

"Well, then, so long. If we don't meet again in this world perhaps we'll see each other in Buffalo."

With this brilliant witticism, Maguire sprang into the waggon, and as he departed waved his hand affably toward them. The young men sat down again in the shade as their late companion drove out into the sunshine, followed by a pillar of dust that rose straight up behind him in the still air throbbing with heat. Jim was the first to break the silence, for the retreating wheels, muffled in the sand, made no noise.

"There goes as thorough-paced a scoundrel as one would meet in a long day's journey."

"Jim, Jim, Jim, Jim. Judge not that ye be not judged. You rather frighten me, Jim, with your harshness toward anyone you take a dislike to. I wonder if you'll ever turn on me like that. Why should he want to curry favour with us? We can neither help him nor hurt him, and he kept to his word with us, quite willing to do better than he bargained if we had let him."

"Why? Oh, I don't know. Just the vanity of the man. He likes to play on his fellows as some people like to play on a fiddle, and the villain has a talent that way. Don't you see what's happened? The other side has bought him, body and soul, at the last minute; he's going to give the money back anyhow, because he's done better, and so wants to do the grandstand act of the honest man."

"I'd far rather think it was exactly as he said it was."

"So should I, but I don't all the same. Watch his shifty eye. It's always giving him away, in spite of his smooth talk."

"He looked me as straight in the face as any man could."

"Oh, I dare say. Anybody could do that, Ben, because they can see straight through you, but he can't look me in the eye. I suspect there's so much latent scoundrelism in me that he fears like will detect like. If Maguire knew when he was well off he'd settle down here in Michigan. He'll be hanged ultimately anywhere else."

"Just one point, Jim. You know you said he never would pay the twenty-five dollars for our belongings—that he never had the remotest intention of doing so."

"Neither would he if he hadn't made this illicit haul."

"Let us keep to the question without any 'ifs.' You were wrong about that, as has been proven by his action just now, for he paid up without any hint from us, anxious even to do better than he bargained. Now I respectfully submit, as we used to say in our debating society, that one suspicion shown to be utterly groundless is not a good foundation on which to build up a new suspicion."

"Right you are, Ben. Your logic has not deteriorated through a course of peddling. I shall pursue the subject no further, but I still claim a woman's privilege of remaining of the same opinion. To tell the truth, I am not in the least interested in Maguire's career so long as Providence keeps me out of the influnce of it, but I am exceedingly anxious about the careers of those two good young men, Benjamin McAllister and James B. Monro. We have put your great scheme of peddling to a practical test, I reserve judgment on the result and ask you to pronounce. What is the verdict, your honour?"

"The verdict must be failure."

"The associate judge entirely concurs with his colleague."

"Mind, I don't say our failure invalidates the scheme. I hold as I always did that if we could organise the whole peddling trade of the country on one grand co-operative basis, buying directly and in large quantities from the manufacturers and consequently at rock bottom prices and dealing directly with the consumer, we would then inaugurate an immense mutually beneficial—"

"Chuck it, Ben, chuck it. Don't flog a dead horse, in this hot weather, too. Sit down, Ben, and cool off."

The other had risen to his feet and pushed off his hat, running his fingers through his hair until it stood out from his head like the brush of an unkempt broom. His face was aglow with enthusiasm, and he waved his arms about, giving gestures emphatic to his energetic utter-

ances. The calm voice of his friend pulled him suddenly down from the clouds, and he stood there, motion stricken from his limbs, with jaw dropped, a statue of arrested intensity. Monro laughed.

"When a project's abandoned, drop it. Don't waste further vigour on it. Apply instead high pressure to the barber's exclamation, 'Next!'"

McAllister opened his mouth to reply, closed it again, and paced up and down the parched sward, touseling his hair as he went along, his head bent in thought. Monró reclined lazily watching him.

"You like to throw a bucket of cold water over a person, don't you?" Ben said at last.

"I wish somebody would do that for me just now. Say, Ben, let's hunt up a river or a creek and go in swimming."

The other paid no heed to the suggestion.

"I'd like to talk freely with you, but I'm rather afraid. So much depends on it. I'd rather believe in people than not, and if it is shown that this belief is misplaced in one instance, I don't want that to keep me from believing in someone else. I want to preserve the freshness of my soul. I want to guard my trust in man as well as my trust in Providence."

"Yes? And do you think I would prevent you?"

"No. I don't suppose you would, but I think we ought to start square."

"Well, the first practical thing is to define our objects. If our object is the same, then we may jog along together toward that object. Mine's material success. I want to accumulate one hundred thousand dollars or thereabout of my own, honestly, if possible, as the other fellow said. Now, what's your object?"

"Mine! Mine's a million, with the power that accompanies it."

"All right. There you are. That's along the same road as I propose to jog, only a little further on. Now, what's your route?"

"The first thing we need is another partner."

"I don't agree with you there. Two's a limited com-

pany; three's none. Furthermore, if your mind's hovering about Patrick Maguire, I give you notice right at once that I'm out."

"I wasn't thinking of him."

"Who, then?"

"God."

"What!"

"I propose to take God into partnership with us."

"I suppose you mean that I should join some denomination, make profession of religion, I think they call it."

"My dear Jimmy, you don't understand me a little bit, and that's not to be wondered at, because I haven't explained it fully to you. What I am making to you is a cold business proposition; no religion in it all, at least none from your end of the partnership. But I couldn't take in another partner without your consent, for, don't you see, when it came to a vote God and I would form the majority of the board of directors, and you might not like to have things carried over your head in that way. So I thought I would speak frankly with you at the start."

All the indolence left Monro's attitude. He sat up and regarded his friend with an expression of anxiety not unmixed with alarm. With anyone else than McAllister this kind of talk might have been taken as blasphemous jesting, not in very good taste in any circumstances. But Monro had long known him as a youth of most serious intentions where things sacred were concerned, a devout believer, and a leader among the piously inclined in his college; so the only inference was that much brooding on the subject had affected his mind. McAllister, receiving no answer, stopped in his promenade and, seeing the look of dismay in his friend's face, laughed in a manner so hearty that Monro, after a moment or two, joined him, all his doubt as to the sanity of the former being dissipated by their mutual mirth.

"I thought at first you were in earnest," said Monro.

"Oh, I am serious enough, but a glance at your face just now would make anybody laugh."

"Then kindly explain how you intend to arrive at the

will of the Lord, in any case where your opinion differs from mine. I take it that you mean our business relations to be regulated in a measure by the Good Book, and to that I have no objection, so long as it is done on practical lines."

"My dear boy, of course it will be done along practical lines, so practical that we cannot possibly fail, and to convince you of that I will explain the modus operandi. Let me ask you if you believe in the Bible?"

"Yes, I suppose so: in a general way, as the average man believes it."

"Do you believe it on Sunday or on Wednesday?"

"If I believe it at all I believe it every day in the week."

"That's right. That's the way to believe it. A great many people believe it only on Sunday, just as the churches are open on that day and on no other. Now, I believe it every day and every hour in every day and every minute in every hour. If I ever possess an office I'm going to have a Bible bound the same as ledger and daybook, right on the desk with them, and that will be our workable written constitution. In this Bible is a legal contract offered to me by the Lord, and I have accepted it. I am the party of the second part. It is plain, direct and to the point, without any of the unnecessary or obscuring verbiage which a modern lawyer would put in to bind both parties, and the agreement is, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you.' All what things? Anything you may legitimately desire; your hundred thousand, or my million. Now, I have sought the kingdom of heaven and so have fulfilled that proviso. I have written out this contract, and beneath I have put the words, 'Accepted by Benjamin McAllister.'"

"Um, yes. Ben, that's all very well; but I think you are interpreting the Scriptures just a trifle literally. Of course you are much better versed in them than I am, but still my impression is that these texts refer rather to spiritual matters than to material things. As the lawyers say, you must take into consideration the context, and I believe I am right when I hold that the general tenor of

the Bible sets rather against riches than for them. If you seek the kingdom of heaven you will probably get it, but not necessarily your million here on earth."

"Now, Jim, there's just where you're away off, and that's just the mistake the world has been making for centuries. My idea of the Lord is this: There is nothing small or mean about Him. He isn't going to shelter Himself behind a technicality; that kind of thing is human and legal. The Lord knows very well that I don't understand Hebrew or Greek, but just straight, plain American talk. If there's been any mistake made in the translation, or if there is any subtle meaning in the contract, why, that's not my fault, and even if He didn't intend the passage to be taken literally, the very fact that I take it literally is enough, and I have every faith that He will hold to His end of the bargain as long as I adhere faithfully to mine. There is the contract set down in black and white, worded so simply that any man, woman or child can understand it. You must believe it if you believe the Bible. I accept it without any mental reservation whatever, and I expect the party of the first part to fulfil to the letter His promise, and, what is more, I shall demand such fulfilment."

As McAllister spoke with fervid declamation, hands nervously outstretched, like a man exhorting, all the preacher in his nature was brought into evidence. Monro replied with calm gravity:

"Not demand, Ben: request or beseech is the word you surely intended to use. You forget that you are speaking of God, and although I make no claim to being a devout person, yet really, religious as I believe you to be, you say things that shock me."

"I mean no disrespect, but I hold that the world has been wrong in the grovelling attitude it has heretofore taken up before the Lord. I don't think He wants it or cares for it. He has a right to demand of me that I keep His laws, and I have a right to demand of Him the completion of any promise He makes me."

"Well, we will let it go at that, agreeing to differ on the attitude. Now, let us come to the practical working

of your partnership. Do you intend to put forth the schemes and leave the working of them to your heavenly partner?"

"No, sir. I look on God as I would look upon a rich man who furnished us with a working capital. In our present partnership we will each do the best we can, until we are up against a stone wall that we can't either climb over or break down; then we will call for assistance from the Lord, asking Him either to show us a way out, or to remove an obstruction we cannot surmount."

"I believe in that. The plan strikes me as good common-sense. If a man will do his very best right along —yes, I believe in that, and I'm willing to join on such conditions. Now, to go a step further, have you had any consultation on the peddling business?"

"Yes, sir," replied Ben, with great emphasis, "and the peddling business is no good."

Monro laughed. "I agree with my partners on that," he said.

"Last night," continued McAllister, unheeding laughter or remark, "I prayed more earnestly than ever I prayed before; for this peddling was my scheme, and I wanted an opinion on it. I said, 'O Lord, Jim and I are up a tree, and we're not making a cent. We owe nearly two weeks' board to these honest people here, and we haven't a dollar to pay it with, and perhaps they don't care to take the truck we have to offer them, for nobody seems to want it. Now I don't believe Pat Maguire is going to buy our things, or if he did I don't suppose he's got the money to pay for them; so we're all at sea and haven't a notion what to do. Give us a hint. We'll start out peddling to-morrow morning same as usual, and if we've got discouraged too soon let the first man we apply to or the first woman buy something; then we'll keep on. If not, let somebody make an offer for our horse and waggon and stock.' Now, Jim, do you remember what the first man we met said to us this morning?"

"I don't just recollect, but it wasn't anything very pleasant."

"He said, 'What are you fellows fooling 'round the

country in this way for, like a couple of loafers, when there's good work waiting to be done? Here you are, two able-bodied young men, a-peddling!' That's what he said. He thought he was speaking, but I knew it was the voice of the Lord. I knew the moment he spoke that we were going to sell our rig before noon and get the cash. And, do you know, I think I ought to have taken the extra five dollars Maguire offered. I believe we'll need that money."

"I told you at the time you should have taken it."

"Well, I was wrong there. You see what comes of depending too much on one's self."

"Oh, the firm will easily make an extra five when it gets a-going. What's the next item on the programme?"

"I told it to Maguire. We're going to Chicago, and then down to Stormboro. That was impressed on me this morning when I woke up."

"What's the object?"

"I don't know just yet. That will all come in good time."

"It will take a good slice out of our cash, eight dollars each at least, so when we've paid for our board there won't be much left."

"My dear Jim, you forget our usual way of travelling. Don't you know they're shipping west all the grain cars there are in this country to take this wheat crop to the seaboard? There'll be train after train of empty grain cars going through Chicago, and you can't ask for a more comfortable ride than in an empty grain car; it's clean and commodious, and you can get a good sleep. When they're full of wheat it seems comfortable at first, but the cold grain chills you to the bone in a long ride. Besides the doors are apt to be locked when the cars are full, but we'll have no trouble finding a place in a train of west-bound empties."

Jim threw himself on the sward at full length, laughing boisterously and long, rolling from side to side and kicking up his heels like an urchin let loose from school, which in truth he was. Ben looked down upon him, with wonder at this sudden attack of hilarity.

"What's the matter?" he asked in a tone of astonishment. "There isn't anything particularly funny in a ride on a freight train; we've often done it before."

"Often, often, Ben, and there's nothing funny about it, as you say, especially when you're riding on the trucks underneath, or between the cars, or even on the swaying top, keeping an eye out for a brakeman with a heavy boot; but it does seem a little incongruous for you to be preaching religion and morality a minute ago, and now coolly proposing that we steal a ride on the Michigan Central Railroad. Hasn't the Lord anything to do with that corporation if we are allowed to cheat it?"

"We're not cheating anybody, nor stealing anything," cried Ben, indignantly. "We must get to Chicago, and we haven't the money to spare. Our being in the car won't cost the Michigan Central a penny extra. It won't have to expend another pound of coal because of our additional weight."

"Oh, I know all the arguments in favour of such a proceeding. It's always our sin that is innoxious, with plenty of excuses for it, and it's the other fellow's crime which is unpardonable. There's poor Maguire, for instance. His proposed bribing of voters was heinous in your eyes. Now, it is possible, although I admit not probable, that Maguire might look upon stealing a ride as dishonest. I don't see much difference between the morality of the two acts myself."

"Why, yes, you do. Bribing electors is a crime against the state and a corrupting of others. If I were a friend of Henry B. Ledyard, the president of the road, I have no doubt he would give me a pass, and I could travel to Chicago in luxury and comfort; yet the railway would be no more harmed or benefited in the case of the passenger in the first-class coach than in the case of the two of us in the freight car. Are we to suffer because instead of being friends of a railroad president we are merely friends of the Lord? I guess not. Besides, I'll send the amount of our ride to the road as soon as I get the money. I've kept an account of all the trips I've taken on freight trains, and some day I'm going to settle up with interest. That's honest enough to suit anybody."

Jim continued laughing, much to Ben's discomfiture. A serious man never likes being made the butt of a frivolous friend.

"I'd just like to see you tell the ordinary hardened railway employee, whose delight is firing tramps off trains, that you are travelling on a pass given by Providence. I doubt if he would honour it, and I think I should rather have Ledyard's signature on mine. What will you say if we are discovered and thrown out, as we will be if we are caught?"

"Say? There will be nothing to say but that the Lord intends us to get off at that place. That's simple enough."

"Well, Ben, I'm with you, of course, but I must admit that if I'm to have a stop-over hint from above I wish it would take some other form than my being flung over the head of some stalwart brakemen onto a pile of railroad ties. I've been there before."

"All right. If you're through with your scoffing remarks and will get on your feet, we'll mosey off to the farm, settle our bill and say good-bye, then on to Ann Arbor before nightfall."

"Just one more point on the general question before we end this interesting discussion. Are you certain the Lord intends us to go to Chicago, and then down into Illinois?"

"Yes, I am. Of course we may be deflected before we get there."

"I think we won't."

"No? Why?"

"Why? Simply because there's a nice and attractive young lady whom it is unnecessary to name, in the town of Stormboro."

"What do you mean?"

"Be honest, Ben. You see how this projected raid on the Michigan Central has shaken my faith in your probity, and now you confirm this by pretending you don't know what I mean."

"I suppose you are referring to Miss Constance Fraser."

"I suppose I am. I heard a preacher say once that, in the matter of investments, religious people were very

apt to see the finger of the Lord pointing towards ten per cent. I have known ministers themselves seek guidance when a bigger salary was offered them, and they generally found duty drag them toward the richer congregation. If we are going to do business on guidance lines, I want to be very sure that there are no other influences at work, or if they are at work I want the fact to be faced honestly."

Ben's brow ruffled, and he bent his head for a few moments. "Do you know, Jim," he said at last, "that very point occurred to me last night? I do want to see her; there's no use in denying it. Still I have tried not to let this wish affect me one way or other."

"All right, Ben, I believe you. Let us go."

CHAPTER IX

"YOU CHARGE ME MOST UNJUSTLY."

LOTTIE stood still, with her hands behind her back, gazing open-eyed at the door which had been slammed and which seemed to quiver with anger. She aroused herself at last with a long-drawn sigh.

"Ah, well," murmured the girl to herself, "it doesn't matter. It is better that he should not come here again; still . . . I'm sorry."

Mrs. Byfield came in the dining-room from the parlour, where she had been dusting. She found Lottie quietly clearing away the dishes that remained on the table.

"Was that Mr. Maguire was here just now?"

"Yes, mother."

"Didn't he have his breakfast?"

"He has had it just now."

"Where did he come from?"

"He was over at Slade's."

"Oh, that's just like old Slade's meanness, to let a man go away without giving him a bite to eat."

"Breakfast was over when he got there, mother."

"Well, it's over here, but I hope we never turn away a hungry man, at any hour of the day."

The daughter made no reply, silently busied with her work, the mother watching with anxious intentness. At last she spoke again.

"What were you talking about, Lottie?"

"Nothing."

"I thought I heard loud voices."

"He was speaking about the voting to-morrow."

"I wonder why he takes such an interest in it?"

The girl was too truthful to say she didn't know, and

so continued her accustomed reticence. The mother seemed nervously fidgety, disturbed by the melancholy in the girl's moist eyes, wishing to know the cause, but baffled by the atmosphere of diffident reserve that surrounded both, and afraid to ask a direct question.

The strong affection with which each regarded the other was deep, but rarely vocal.

"Does he seem to be satisfied with the way he is getting along about the voting?"

"Yes; I think so."

"Well, it's curious what people will do for a living, though I don't see how he's to make anything out of this; yet he's up early and going late and talking, talking all the time. I am sure he's the dreadfulest man to talk I ever heard. It doesn't seem to make any difference to him whether anybody else talks or not; he's always got something to say. But then it's here to-day and gone to-morrow with the like of him. I don't think peddling's much of a business, or he wouldn't drop it so quick to go in for electioneering, 'specially when there's nothing to be made of it that I can see. He didn't say anything about that, did he?"

"He mentioned it among other things. I didn't take much notice of what he said."

"Well, I think it's just as well not to take much notice of people that come from we don't know where. I don't know anything agin him, but then I don't know much in his favour, either."

This bringing no response, the good woman went on with her reflections.

"After all, there's nothing like some one we know, who has a good farm, for when a young man has a farm there's something to him. It's hard work, but there's always a sure living to be made out of it. I don't pay much attention to them that come and go, like. It seems so kind of uncertain. A farm's a farm, and if the mortgage on it's not too heavy there it is, and you can count on it."

The advantages of possessing a farm were so undoubted that the girl found no comment to offer upon a self-evident proposition. The mother appeared to think

that it was necessary to make her remarks even more general than they were. She was awed by her daughter's silence and evident depression, for the latter of which she could assign no cause, unless it had something to do with the sudden departure of the visitor.

"I never could see that them that went away from home bettered themselves much, even when young men go. They say that William Slade's not doing so very well out in Minnesota, even with land cheaper than it is in Michigan, and they do say the locusts is something dreadful away west in Oregon and them places. I do hope Sam won't take it into his head to go west like he was talking about when Billy Slade went, for I'm sure there's no need, his father not being as close-fisted as old Slade, who wouldn't care if his family was scattered to the four winds of heaven as long's he wasn't asked for a cent. Boys with fathers like that can't worsen themselves much, and there's always the chance of doing better."

Lottie breathed easier as the gender of the one-sided discussion changed, and she uttered a low-voiced sentence of agreement, glad that the danger of investigating her own feelings was over. She would like to have spoken freely to her mother, but some inward feeling of semi-ashamed reluctance held her back.

At noon McAllister and Monro put in an appearance and enjoyed their dinner. They announced their departure, and attempted to settle their board bill, but all recompense was refused by Mrs. Byfield. They were more than welcome, she said, but the husband kept silence. However, the consciences of the boys were satisfied, for Mr. Byfield himself, bidding them good-bye on the stoop, made no objection to the acceptance of the cash, looking cautiously over his shoulder the while and slipping it with rapidity into his trousers pocket. They waved farewell to Lottie, standing half-concealed at the front window, and went off down the road erect and with swinging, hopeful gait, as if the pack which had left their shoulders had lifted from them a heavier weight than its bulk indicated. She thought she would never see them again, not realising the smallness of our insignificant planet.

The men, hired and free, but equally hard-worked, went out once more to the fields, and the women finished their duties in the house. Lottie remembered with a pang, which she strove to conceal from herself, that this was the hour, every day since he had been in the neighbourhood, that Maguire had come casually round to the farm, sometimes from one direction, sometimes from another, always ready with a plausible excuse for his presence. As she dressed herself she thought of their quarrel, if the fall-out could be dignified by such a term. It seemed low and squalid, pertaining to a heap of torn bank-notes, dirty in every sense of the word. No such unsavoury differences had ever divided hero and heroine in the charming Peterson romances; they were severed (temporarily, it is true) by some high matter of principle, perhaps the hero's poverty and his scornful refusal to profit by a richly dowered bride. But to separate in anger over the question of the hero's right to some greasy bills was something too sordid for the fair pages of a lady's magazine. As this thought crossed Lottie's mind, the beginning of disillusion, she heard, with a sudden accession of heart beats, the customary click of the front gate, just as it had clicked at that hour every day for the last two weeks. From where she stood she saw Maguire come through the gateway and up the walk, hat on the back of his head as usual; jaunty confidence in his stride. No depression there, to all appearance; no searching of the heart as to whether the right tone had been taken; no remorse. There was nothing of the returned repentant in that superb swagger.

Lottie sank on the one chair that occupied her room, resolved not to see him, if, indeed, he wished to see her. After all, it was not the bundle of notes they had disputed about, but a question of right and wrong, and right was right, whatever resulted. She heard him enter the deserted parlour. The footsteps paused at the door, advanced to the table and paused again. Then she heard her own name breathed softly, once, twice, thrice, a little louder each time, and her hand went up to her pal-

pitating throat, where her breath came and went with difficulty, but she did not move. The silence of the room seemed to oppress the volatile visitor, for he cried out in his habitually boisterous tones:

"Everybody gone a-harvesting?"

Lottie heard the door of the adjoining room open, and then her mother's gentle voice greeted the incomer.

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Maguire? I don't know where Lottie is gone. Very likely she is out at the chickens."

"Yes, it's me, Mrs. Byfield, large as life and every bit as handsome. I've kind of dropped round to say good-bye, for I must be off to-morrow. Best of friends must part, you know, and I've had a high old time in this here locality."

"I'm sorry you're going, but I suppose an energetic young man like you wants to be doing something, and there isn't much money to be made round here."

"That's a fact. Yes, I'm just about off for New York. I know they're a-howling for me there, 'cause I'm so long a-coming."

"Is that where your folks live?"

"Oh, bless you, no. I've never been there myself either, but I guess they want a man with some get-up-and-git about him in that town. So they tell me, and I'm ready to do what I can for them. Now, Mrs. Byfield, I've got a nice, new, crisp ten-dollar bill here for you. Not but that I've had ten times the worth of it. Still, if I get off at that, I'm more than satisfied."

Lottie, listening, rose impulsively from her chair, her breath coming quick and eager, and stood with her hand hovering over the latch. But her mother's answer reassured her, and the outstretched hand fell to her side again as silently as it had been raised.

"I couldn't think of taking anything. I'm sure you're very welcome to whatever you've had in this house."

"Now, Mrs. Byfield, you mustn't say that. I owe the money over and over again, and I tell you I'm getting off dead cheap. I feel a regular sneak, paying so little. Do take it, Mrs. Byfield."

"I couldn't think of it, and we are treating you no

different from the others. Your two friends were here at noon to bid us good-bye, and I wouldn't take anything from them, although they insisted, and I won't take anything from you, either."

"Why, you should take all the more from me, because I was the reason of them being here; yes, indeed, I ought to pay for the crowd. Now, it's just like this. I want to come back here again and see you all, but if you don't take this money I can't come back. I wouldn't have the cheek. If you don't take this bill I swear I'll tear it up and throw away the pieces, and then it won't do nobody any good."

Again Lottie's hand raised to the latch and wavered there.

"You wouldn't do anything so foolish. I'm sure you're quite welcome to come back here any time you want to."

"Mrs. Byfield, you're like everybody else after all. And I thought you were different. You're downright hard on me. I want you to take this money and buy something for yourself with it. Then, when I'm away, I'll feel good to think you've had something you wanted, and perhaps you will remember a fellow wandering about the country that happened along here in harvest time. That's what I'd like. You see, Mrs. Byfield, I ain't got no mother of my own to give ten dollars to—I wish I had—and you've been as good as a mother to me. That's right, every time. You think because I don't go round dressed as fine as some fellows that I ain't got much money, but that's where you're away off. I can make money where other fellows would starve. Look at that pile? I had all that when I came here, but I wasn't going round bragging about it."

Lottie, standing there, imagined him holding out the roll of grimy bills to her mother, whose ejaculation of astonishment she heard. But her confidence that the money would not be accepted reasserted herself, and her hand sank once more to her side.

"I'm very glad you're doing so well."

"Well? You bet! But it's nothing to what I will do, Mrs. Byfield, for this is the country to make money in,

and I'm the man to make it. I'm a fellow that pays my way every time. What's a man if he's not honest? He doesn't amount to shucks. So now, Mrs. Byfield, I know you'll oblige me by taking this here ten; for if you didn't I'd feel that I'd cheated, and I hate to go away feeling like that. It 'ud break my luck, sure."

"Well, if you feel like that about it, Mr. Maguire, I'll take it, although it's altogether too much, and I'd rather, if you insist on paying, you'd make it half at most."

"Not a half. I'm no half-way man, I ain't, and you've made me feel better'n I've felt for years."

Lottie's hand struck the latch, and the door was flung open.

"Don't touch that money, mother!" she cried, with blazing eyes. "It is dishonest. Stolen money would be cleaner."

"Why, Lottie!" was all the astounded woman could gasp. Even the self-sufficient and collected Maguire took a startled step backward, and the disputed bill fluttered to the floor like an autumn leaf.

"That money was collected for bribing wretches who are ready to sell their votes to-morrow, and he is cheating the cheaters; running the risk of state's prison in order to get it."

"Oh," sighed Mrs. Byfield, shrinking still further from the ownerless banknote on the floor and looking as guilty as if she had been detected in compounding a felony.

"Will you let me say a few words?" inquired Maguire in accents as gentle as those of a dove.

"No, I won't," exclaimed the girl, vehemently, "you've already said more than enough. Pick up your ten-dollar bill and take it away from this house."

The young man made no motion to recover his property, but stood there, an expression of the most angelic mildness on his face. When he spoke, it was in a tone of chastened sadness.

"You will surely hear me, Mrs. Byfield. I cannot complain, for everyone is down on me, and I guess I deserve it. Miss Byfield is quite right to talk like that about me, for this morning I deserved it, yes, I did, every

word of it, and more. You see, I've had no sort of bring-up, and this is the only house I ever had anyone talk to me in as I should be talked to, and that's why I feel grateful. I told Miss Byfield this morning, right out, what I intended to do, and she said straight that I was no good. Well, I got mad; that's the kind of durn fool I am, and I went out and hitched up my pony, getting madder 'n madder. Then when I got out on the road I began to think, and I said to myself, 'Pat, that girl's dead right, and you're a chump.' That's what I said. The more I thought, the more I see things right, and the worst of it was because I had plenty of money and didn't need to do this kind of thing to get more. Then I felt dog mean and ashamed of myself. Yes, I did. I went right round to them voters and I says to 'em, 'You don't get one cold durned cent from me, so you just vote the way you've a mind to.' That's right, for I'm a-giving it to you straight, and there's eleven of the craziest mad voters in this here polling precinct that you ever see. And all the more so 'cause they ain't got anybody to kick but themselves, and they daren't squeal about it, but all that don't matter to me as long's I got a clear conscience. Then I catches old Slade at noon, and he don't like that, cause he can't decently help but ask me to have something to eat. But I didn't sit down. I says to him, 'Mr. Slade,' I says, 'here's this money back again just as you give it to me. If you want to do any state's prison bribing you've got to do it yourself. You count this money and you give me back my receipts,' for I had to give the old beggar two of 'em, so's he'd be sure to clear himself if any trouble came. 'You give me them there receipts,' I said. Well, he counted them bills and silver over two or three times like he was in a dream, and then he onlocked a bookcase and give me my receipts, and there they are."

Maguire sighed deeply as he finished his long harangue, which had been addressed to Mrs. Byfield; but when he, with humble mien, placed the documents in question on the table, he put them where the girl could read them: then he drew back deferentially and in most creditable fashion took up the pose of the wronged man.

In spite of her prohibition, Lottie stood by the door while he spoke, looking intently at him like one hypnotised. He never glanced at her until he had finished, and then he was delighted to see consternation and dismay on her fair countenance. That she believed every word he said—and, indeed, he had spoken the truth as nearly as was possible for him—was evident, and the culminating proof of the documents served but to emphasise the horror she felt at her unjustifiable slander of an innocent fellow-creature. She turned, leaned her arm across the door jamb, buried her face in it, and moaned, "I am sorry," that short phrase being all her emotion allowed her to utter.

"Oh, you mustn't mind," said Maguire, genially; "it's all right. I'm used to it, you know. If there was a horse stolen in the neighbourhood, they'd all say it was Maguire. That's why I'm going East; for if I went West they'd surely lynch me for the horse somebody else made off with. That's my luck; but I never kick, for I know it'll all come right some day, unless they get after me with a rope and choke off explanations."

"I don't think Lottie quite meant what she said," commented the mother, quietly and almost stealthily retreating toward the door that led to the dining-room, for she felt that inopportuneness of presence which the average American parent experiences when two young people have their private affairs to discuss or any unpleasant difference to arrange. In nothing has the severance of the new world from the old been more marked than in the abdication of father or mother from all position of interference with the adjustment of relationship which takes place between young people.

"Yes, I meant it, mother," murmured the girl, "and there is no excuse for me!"

"Well, then, you should certainly apologise to Mr. Maguire," and with this mild counsel she silently slipped away from them.

"Indeed, Lottie," said the young man tenderly, now that they were alone, "there's no need, not the slightest at all, at all."

"Oh, but there is. I have been very unjust, and I do apologise."

"Sit you down here, Lottie, where you've always sat when we talked, and let bygones be bygones. Or, better than that, let us have our old bygones, nice and friendly like we always had them. You see I'm a hot-headed kind of a cuss, and this morning, when you said I wasn't honest—well, I didn't like it, and so went off the handle in a sort of way, because, you know, as a general rule, I *am* honest, and it riled me to hear you say I wasn't. But then, I always come to look on things in the right way if you give me time, and so, by and by I see that this here bribing of voters isn't the thing at all, at all. Funny, isn't it? People never think of money spent at elections as dishonest. They don't in towns, and don't even seem to out here in the country. Well, I ain't any better than the average, and I look on things in the same way, until somebody pulls me up with a round turn, like you did to-day, and then I begin to think. That's just the way of it. I thought at first you was hard on me, but when I turned it over and over in my mind I see you was dead right. Yes, sir. And then I didn't waste a minute but lit right out to set things straight."

"I was hard. I shouldn't have spoken as I did. I have no right to set up as a judge of another—no right at all, and I ask you to forgive me for what I said just now."

"Oh, you're all right, and you did just right. Women are better than men all the world over, and, if they weren't, this would be a tough place to live in. Now I'm off to Philadelphia in the morning, only instead of Philadelphia it's New York. Don't you wish me luck?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then that settles it. I'll have all the luck there is. But there isn't much use having luck if you haven't friends to share it with. Now I haven't any friends except what's in this house."

"Oh, yes, you have. There's those two young men who left to-day."

"Yes, I love 'em, of course, but still I wasn't just think-

ing of them when I spoke. I was thinking of you. Say! I want you to be my girl, Lottie."

The young woman, her cheeks like a western sunset, kept her eyes on the tablecloth, nervously puckering up its folds in her fingers, and slowly shook her head.

"Why? I know I ain't good enough, but you'll make me better, although I don't suppose you'll ever make me fit for you."

There was still no response; no uplifting of the eyes.

"Is it because I haven't got the rocks? Thunder! I'll make more money than ever you heard of. Sure. There won't be any trouble about that. Why, there's plenty money waiting for me to pick up." Saying this, he stooped down, crumpled in his hand the ownerless ten-dollar bill that lay on the rag carpet and playfully threw it at her. She started back as the paper unexpectedly struck her downward bent face and laughed uneasily.

"Why, I've money to throw away," he continued. "I've got money to burn now; what won't I have in ten years, with New York just crammed with cash."

There was still no mitigation of the silent negative, and Maguire's fancy took alarm in another direction.

"Is there somebody else, then? You just tell me his name, and I'll go and knock his head off. Yes, sir! I'll do it in two minutes."

Lottie laughed now with more of heartiness in her tone, and spoke at last.

"You don't expect, if there was another, that your knocking his head off would recommend you to me?"

"I'll bet it wouldn't recommend him, after I got through with him. No, sir! You'd think he had been into a threshing-machine, and that's just where he would have been."

"Oh, I'm not alarmed; I'm not going to waste any sympathy on him."

"You won't?"

"No, because he doesn't exist, so you see all your bragging is lost."

"Me brag? I never brag. I merely say I would knock him out, whoever he is. It's lucky for him he isn't

anybody, still I'm glad there's no other fellow; that ought to give me a chance, oughtn't it?"

"I don't know why it ought."

"Look here, Lottie, I'm your fellow from this day on, and you're my girl. Do you believe it?"

"No, I don't."

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well that makes it a little awkward; sort of one-sided. Still that one side is pretty determined, and don't you forget it. The court, if she know herself, and she think she do, has one object in this life here below."

"To make money?"

"To make money, of course, but to make it for a girl. Perhaps you don't want to see me come back to this farm?"

"Perhaps I don't."

"Well, do you?"

"I don't know. You might write and tell us how you were getting on. It would be cheaper than railway fare, for New York is a long distance away."

"That's a good idea. I will write, although I'm not much of a hand at it. Then you'll write to me, won't you?"

"I don't see any harm in promising that. Yes, I'll write."

"That's lovely. But, nevertheless, I'm coming back myself, fare or no fare—to see your mother, of course."

"I'm sure she will be very glad to meet you, and to hear that you are prospering."

"I'm sure she will. And you won't forget me, will you?"

"Probably I shall not. And you will forget anything unjust that I said this morning and this afternoon?"

"Oh, you said nothing that I didn't deserve," cried the truthful young man rising and taking her hand. They stood thus for a moment or two in silence, then he said with a sigh, "Good-bye, Lottie."

"Good-bye," she replied simply.

And so Mr. Patrick Maguire departed for the East, leaving on the tablecloth, forgotten by each, a crumpled ten-dollar bill.

CHAPTER X

"RIDES THE WILD MARE WITH THE BOYS"

WHEN McAllister and Monro reached Ann Arbor they reconnoitred the railway station with the nonchalant air of men who cherished no base designs against the peace or prosperity of the Michigan Central Railroad Company. A long freight train was drawn up on a siding, and although it had a locomotive at neither end it was plainly on its journey westward, for the conductor's caboose, most uncomfortable of travelling vehicles, was attached to the portion nearest Detroit. The engine had taken a little excursion of its own to the water tank, that dungeon keep of modern architecture, and there was enjoying a drink, the stalwart fireman in greasy overalls, standing on the heap of coal that filled the tender, holding down a rope that allowed the water to pour from a voluminous spout into the thirsty receptacle.

Darkness had not yet fallen, for summer days are long, and in the twilight there was danger of being seen if any attempt was made to board the standing train; but our young men were adepts at the tramp's method of getting a free ride, and they sauntered down the track on the opposite side of the freight train from the station building, where, in all probability the conductor was getting any orders that the telegraph operator might have to give him. It was not the conductor that they feared, but some brakeman who might appear suddenly from under the train, or from between the cars, examining a suspected coupling, or mending a defective brake. At last the searching eye of Jim Monro caught sight of a partly open door of an empty grain car, and casting a rapid glance up and down the train, seeing the coast was clear, he pushed the slid-

ing door still further open and lightly leaped up into the interior of the dark car. Turning and extending a quick hand to Ben, he speedily hauled his comrade up beside him, and then they pushed the door completely shut.

"Hadn't we better leave it slightly open as we found it?" suggested Ben.

"I think not. It's not likely the train hands will notice, and we're safer from observation if it's shut. Besides, an open door will be a standing invitation for other tramps all the way to Chicago."

They sat together in a dark corner, not daring to converse further, as some murmur of their talk might reach ears outside, until a jolt of the car informed them that the locomotive was again in its place and was backing up ready for the westward advance. A moment later, with a metallic clink, clink, clink of tightening couplers the train was under way, then tired with their walk and the scarcely less fatiguing anxiety of safely boarding the train, they stretched out at full length on the hard springless floor and presently slept more soundly perhaps than many who had that night paid two dollars for a berth in a Pullman. Youth, health and weariness make a wonderful soporific mixture.

Two or three times during the night one or other of them woke up and found the train sometimes standing still, sometimes jogging along, but in no case were they interfered with. Their bones ached, and they tried new positions, sinking immediately into slumber again, which was a blessing. Sometimes they were drowsily conscious in the hollow sounding cavern of the car of quick footsteps on the slightly arched roof above them and the screech of the twisted brake. Again there dashed through their dreams with a whoop and roar a fast express, the clang of bell or the shriek of whistle, swelling into a climax of fierce sound, then suddenly lessening and lowering in tone as it hurried eastward, giving somehow the idea of illimitable and desperate speed. Throughout the night the turmoil of the journey was frequently interrupted by seemingly interminable periods of rest and quiet, during which their slumber became deeper; then a

series of jolts brought them near to the surface of wakefulness. They were dimly conscious that the train came to a large town, with its accompanying noise of numerous shunting engines and the laboured breathing of the air-brake pump on some locomotive standing at the head of a passenger train. The sound of voices in peremptory, decisive outdoor tones disturbed without waking them. The questions asked were often drowsily answered by the sleepers.

"Give her a kick back, Jim," commanded someone just outside the half-inch boards of the car, and Monro sat up suddenly, replying "All right," before he began to wonder what a "kick-back" was. The meaning of the phrase was exemplified by an earthquake jolt eastward that nearly laid him prostrate again, and luckily his own answer to the command had not been heard by the man outside. He was mistily aware that there was a heated discussion about three cars that were to be left at Jackson, and murmured that he had mislaid them or had given them to Maguire, he could not at the moment remember which. Then came complete oblivion, broken at last by an awakening that seemed to have a satisfying sensation of finality about it. For a moment the belief that they had been side-tracked was so strong upon him that it was some time before he was aware of the continued rumble of the train. He knew it must be near morning, although there was still no glimmer of daylight through the chink at the door.

"Awake, Ben?" he asked, softly, that he might not arouse his fellow-traveller should he be really asleep.

"Yes. It must be near morning, don't you think?"

"Seems as if it was the day after to-morrow by the way my bones feel. How did you make it during the night? Sleep any?"

"I guess so. Seemed to wake up every time we stopped, but perhaps I didn't. I ache as if I had had a kicking. I wonder where we are. Better slide open the door a bit and see if you can smell Lake Michigan."

"Oh, we can't be that far west. said Jim, pushing open the door and letting in the cool, fresh breeze. "It's light-

ening in the east, so we must have got the back of the journey to Chicago pretty well broken."

" Shut the door again, Jimmy. We're slowing up."

Monro closed the door, and shortly afterward the train came to a standstill at a way station, and the boys judged by the tramp of feet on a platform that their car was dangerously near to the freight house, therefore all conversation ceased between them.

" Why can't I go on this train? " they heard an angry voice ask.

" Because you can't," was the brief and conclusive answer.

" But, look here, station-master, listen to reason. I'll make it worth your while. I've simply got to be in Chicago early. It's all right enough to tell me to wait for a local, but the local won't get me there in time."

" I'm sorry, but I can't help it."

" Why, yes, you can, if you like." The voice had lost its truculence and was now trying persuasion. " You can let me get into this caboose. I won't hurt it, and the luxury of the car won't hurt me."

" Now, you know, as well as I do, that passengers are not allowed to ride on freight trains, and I haven't the power to give you a permit, and if I did give you one the conductor would be bound to put you off, so there ain't no good saying any more about it."

" Who has power? "

" The superintendent of the road."

" Can I reach him by telegraph? "

" Not at this hour."

" Well, I call it an outrage that a man is dumped down here at this God-forsaken hole, with no connecting trains to any civilised place on earth."

The anger was returning. The speaker seemed to be unaccustomed to contradiction.

" Well, this road ain't responsible for your being dumped down here. We don't run the B, X & O, and have no connections with it."

" You don't seem to run much of anything from this station. Now, I tell you, you won't lose a cent by let-

ting me get to Chicago in time. Here's my card. Why, hang it, I know the Vanderbilts."

"Oh, everybody that wants anything from me is personal friends of the Vanderbilts. I don't know 'em myself, but I know enough to obey their orders. No, sir, I don't want your card."

At this juncture the conductor strolled up from the faraway caboose.

"Hello, Tom; how's No. 9? On time?"

"About eight minutes late, Bill."

"What's No. 9?" asked the stranger. "A passenger train?"

"Somewhat. No. 9's the Pacific express. This freight train's side-tracked to give her right of way."

"Well, can't you flag the express for me? I'll make it all right with the superintendent."

The station-agent seemed to regard this proposition as so insultingly absurd that it required no answer. The lantern hanging looped from the conductor's elbow, shining on the agent's face, showed an expression of wearied disgust.

"Come inside, Bill," said the tired man. The conductor, not having been burdened with so many impossible requests, and having the natural sympathy of a travelled man for a stranger stranded on this out-of-the-way shore, which the local man did not feel—it was his home—threw in a word of advice as he followed his fellow-official:

"You'd better go up to the hotel and get a little sleep. You can't get to Chicago till the local comes along."

The hint, friendly on the part of the giver and unappreciated by the receiver, was not followed—the usual fate of disinterested counsel. The stranger, left alone on the platform, relieved his feelings by swearing a little, then he walked along the train as if he meditated getting into the conductor's car and trusting to bribery for the rest. Ben, ever ready to help a man in a hole, slid open the door of the grain car and startled the stranger with a hoarse stage whisper.

"It's no use, sir. They're bound to throw you off if

you risk the caboose. Nip in here with us, and you'll get to Chicago in the morning, if you don't mind roughing it."

The stranger glanced quickly and nervously up and down the track. All was clear, but there was not a moment to be lost, for afar in the east, glimmering like a morning star, blazed the headlight of the express. The new passenger decided quickly, threw his valise into the box car, grasped Ben's outstretched hand and sprang up beside him. Ben drew the door shut.

" We heard you talk with the station-agent," he said in a tone that was half apologetic, " and as our own talk might be overheard as well we'd better not say anything till the train pulls out."

" All right."

A moment later the express came through with an earthquake roar that made the standing train tremble. In the ensuing silence they heard the conductor and station-agent comment on the disappearance of their questioner.

" I guess he's gone to the hotel," said the conductor. " I advised him to."

" He's a friend of the Vanderbilts, he tells me," commented the agent. " And I says to him, ' The woods are full of them.' "

Here the conversation was broken by the slow, jerky, jangling movement of the freight train. Jim slid the door partly open when they were free of the station and displayed the gradually lightening landscape.

" How consequential an official becomes out here in the backwoods," said the stranger, apparently nettled by the contemptuous, sneering reference to his acquaintance with the eastern magnates. " A man at the head of some enterprise as important as an average empire would not be so inflexible as this station-master. Indeed, the Vanderbilts themselves are simple, unassuming people, who would be glad to grant a favour to a traveller if the chance came their way, amazed as this autocrat of a shanty might be to learn the fact."

" I'm afraid you don't make allowance for the subor-

dinate position of those in the backwoods," commented Ben, ever ready to speak a good word for the under dog. "A man at the head of affairs may make a concession without a thought that would cost an understrapper his place. The bread and butter of our friend in the rear, not to mention his chance of promotion, depend on his doing pretty strictly what he is ordered to do."

"That's so. You're right." There was an inflection of surprise in the stranger's voice, as if he had not expected a response so sensible, couched in simple language that nevertheless gave token of education. He associated box cars with tattered, ignorant tramps, and already had begun to doubt the wisdom of his precipitate entrance into a black perambulating cavern containing two unknown individuals, who might become embarrassing or exacting acquaintances. The increasing light dissipated not only the darkness, but his apprehensions as well.

"How is it you two are travelling in this way?" asked the stranger. "There is nothing of the tramp about either of you, or I am no judge of my fellow-men."

"Oh, I don't know. Appearances are deceptive. I'm rather afraid we might justly be catalogued as tramps. We have been trudging over the country trying to peddle."

"We're a nation of pedlars; we have all something to sell. I am, in a way, a pedlar myself. Are you out of cash?"

"No. Are you?" The stranger laughed.

"I guess I've enough to get breakfast when we reach Chicago."

"So have we."

"Then we're all in the same box. Touring capitalists."

"In the same box car anyhow," put in Jim.

"I don't know much about this style of travelling, but I suggest that you close that door and take in your dangling legs. It's a good position for viewing the scenery, but as we pass through some station the rigid man on duty may see you, telegraph ahead, and get us into trouble at our next stop. I confess I don't want to figure in the police courts charged with stealing a ride."

"That isn't a bad idea," assented Jim, pulling in his legs and sliding the door until it was almost shut. "We've got further west than I thought. We're just coming on those sand hills near the lake."

"May we not have trouble getting out of this? What happens when we reach the depot at Chicago?"

"We don't go near the depot. This train will pull up in the yards some miles out. No, I don't think we'll have any trouble. Have to watch out a bit, that's all. Then, once clear of the yard, we can get a street car into town."

"Well, gentlemen, as the politicians say, I'm in the hands of my friends. This is rather out of my line, so I'll do just what you tell me to do, and if, in spite of the best intentions, luck proves against us, we'll stand or fall together. Once clear of the yard, as you say, I hope you will consent to become my guests, in which case I can guarantee you a good breakfast."

"That's all right," said Jim. "Speaking for myself, I'll enjoy it, for we have had nothing to eat since yesterday noon."

"Heavens, you must be hungry. How did that come about?"

"Mainly through the negligence of the Michigan Central in not running dining cars on their freight trains. We had no time for supper at Ann Arbor, and have had time enough, but no chance, since."

"You came from Ann Arbor, then. College men?"

"In a kind of a way, yes, but not from the University of Michigan. We were graduated a few months ago, after a four years' course in Stormboro, Ill., took to peddling, failed, and are now working our way back there to get a fresh start."

"What are you going to do?"

"We're willing to do anything that's reasonably honest and decidedly lucrative."

"I'm a Yale man myself, but have been away from there long enough to learn something. Now here's a thing not taught at Yale, and possibly ignored in centres of learning and education further west. A man willing to do anything is not worth a damn. The woods are full of

them, as the station agent said of the friends of the Vanderbilts, and a futile lot they are. No, sir. The man who succeeds is the man who is not willing to do anything, but is able to do some one thing and do it better than anybody else. This country is shouting for specialists. The very first thing for a young man to do is to choose his line, then stick to it, qualify himself to handle that line better than anybody else can handle it, and if he has chosen wisely he will succeed as far as the limits of the business will allow him to go. Of course, if he adopts some course that has no future to it, something where energy and concentration of attention will not force expansion, he can't expect big dividends; but everything is growing in this country; conditions are changing and changing rapidly. That's what gives a young man his chance. Let him jump into something that has a right of way before it, and he's bound to become a millionaire."

"Talk is cheap!" cried Jim, irritated by the easy confidence of a man who was evidently rich and who had had advantages at the beginning which were denied to his poverty stricken listeners. "Nominally the choice of any business in the United States is open to us. Practically no such choice is allowed. We have so little money that we are now stealing a ride to save it. What can we do? We must live, and in order to live we must sell our liberty and work for someone who has money. If we happen to strike an employer who appreciates the qualities we have to sell, then we may get on slowly. If not, we have to slave along until we get another chance. Nothing makes me so tired as to read interviews with men who have succeeded, probably by great good luck if the truth were known, who then pose as having done it all themselves, ignoring circumstances that went to their enrichment."

"I don't quite see the point you are trying to make."

"The point is this. You went to Yale. Very well. That means that you had a father or someone else who put up the money for you. I'll bet you don't work as a hired man to accumulate the cash that was to send you through college. We did."

"Very creditable to you. The day before I left Yale I was getting up a party of my friends to go as my guests on my father's steam yacht that cost just under a hundred thousand dollars."

"Well, we couldn't have taken our friends for an excursion in a dugout canoe. You must admit that the conditions were a trifle different."

"Slightly. Still if you look up my name to-day in Bradstreet you will find me rated at $5,000,000. I am double your age, and possess that much in money or its equivalent. I don't say this by way of boasting; I merely offer it as evidence that I know what I'm talking of when I venture to give advice about getting on in the world, and that therefore my opinion is entitled to a certain amount of attention."

"My dear sir, the conditions are so totally dissimilar that, without meaning any disrespect, they largely discount the value of your opinion."

Jim spoke with manifest warmth, but the stranger remained imperturbable. His voice never raised a semitone above its calm, normal level. He sat on his valise and regarded his excited interlocutor with a slightly amused air of tolerance that seemed more than his words to provoke the young man. Jim had his legs curled up under him, Turkish fashion, and was jabbing the blade of his open knife into the floor of the car. Ben took no part in the controversy, but listened intently to every word of it, his gaze fastened on the face of the stranger, a face keen and clear cut, almost boyish in appearance, although the effect of youth was mitigated by a touch of grey at the temples. The otherwise dark hair was closely cropped. The finely chiselled firm lips were softened by the evanescent suggestion of a smile.

"My young friend, you shouldn't jump at conclusions. You never can be sure where you will land. You worked as hired man and thus got the money that put you through a cheap college. The toil and the ambition were alike creditable to you, as I have said, and right here make a note of it that there was where you had your first advantage over me. You were graduated. I was

not. That is, perhaps, another advantage. When I had got my yachting party together news came to me of the failure of my father, and the news of his failure was simultaneous with the news of his death by his own hand. He was supposed to be one of the richest men in New York, but the storm of a financial crisis struck him, and his going down was the precursor of many another wreck, and the inauguration of one of the worst monetary panics from which America has ever suffered. Now, try to appreciate the situation. I was the useless son of a supposed millionaire, accustomed to the lavish spending of money, with no more knowledge of making it than Cleopatra had. I could handle a yacht, could row in a boat, possessed some experience in athletics, but I had not a single useful bit of craft knowledge for which any sane man would have paid me fifty cents a day. Here again you had the advantage of me. Rich friends? Plenty of them, I thought. A week before and my card would have got me entrance into the private room of any banker in New York, now the name of Mitchell was a scoff and a by-word across the broad American continent. My father was supposed to be the head and front of all the trouble; his reputation was rent to rags in every paper in the country. Of all my acquaintances I perhaps knew least of him, and he had never had time to seek any knowledge of me; but I am sure he was no more to blame than many others for the crisis. The business world was honeycombed with over-speculation and the crash had to come, but, according to the press, it was all Mitchell's fault, and his suicide was taken as a confession.

"I soon discovered that I hadn't a friend, and this is partly accounted for by the fact that most of those I knew were in the same line as my father, or in business closely associated, and were hard hit, many of them going under themselves and therefore in no mood to help a useless young man, even if they were in a position to do so. I found most doors closed to me, and if by any chance I was allowed to see the man on whom I called I soon realised that he looked on me as a cumberer of the earth to whom he had made up his mind to lend five dollars if a

strong enough appeal was urged upon his attention. But I did not want to borrow—I wanted a job. I learned gradually that all these men looked with contempt upon one who had only a college training to recommend him, and this seemed illogical, for all of them were sending their own sons to one university or another. If I could have said that I never saw a college but that I had made fifty thousand dollars in a deal, they might have paid much more heed to my application for work. All hope of getting a secretaryship, a place in a bank or such like genteel occupation vanished from my mind. My resources were almost at an end when I bethought myself of a man in Connecticut, at whose palatial residence I had once spent a vacation, the guest of his son, who, by the way, was to have been one of the members of my yachting party. Old Bonsel was a carriage manufacturer in a large way and was rich, although not in the same category of wealth that my father had been supposed to occupy. I figured out that, being a manufacturer, he was not so likely to be affected by the panic as the financial magnates of the metropolis, and that I would therefore have more chance with him. In social life he had seemed to me a bluff, honest sort of man, a little too fond of boasting how well he had made his own way in the world, yet exceedingly glad that his son and I were friends. I had had many pressing invitations to visit him.

"I reached his factory almost without a cent in my pocket, and having sent in my name to Mr. Bonsel I was kept waiting for nearly an hour in the outer office, which did not strike me as encouraging. At last I was shown in, and the portly, successful carriage-builder, turning slowly round in his office-chair, looked me over from head to foot and from foot to head, then said:

"'Well, young man, what can I do for you?'

"'You have large works here, Mr. Bonsel, so I thought perhaps you could give me a job in some portion of them.'

"'You are right, they are large. I own them and I began in a one-roomed carpenter shop, with no college education either. There are two buildings, each three hun-

dred feet long and three stories high. There are ninety thousand square feet of floor space, all busy with capable men and the most effective kind of machinery. What particular ten square feet of that space do you feel yourself fitted to occupy?'

"'You mean, in short, what can I do? Well, Mr. Bonsel, I'm willing to do anything.'

"The old man brought his fist down on his desk and gave expression to the remark which disturbed you a short time ago. He said the man willing to do anything was not worth his salt, and the offensive way he said it made me angry, helpless as I was.

"'Look here, Mr. Bonsel; a hundred years from to-day you'll be dead, but they will be making carriages just the same. The men who will be making those carriages are not yet born, but they will learn. I'm ready to learn.'

"My anger increased his. He got red in the face. Few of us like to admit that we are going to die, and that the world will get on very well without us, especially if we are important personages in our locality, as he was.

"'You impudent young whelp,' he cried. 'That's college manners, I suppose.'

"'Not so, sir. It is an eternal fact, true before colleges were thought of; a fact which will remain true after the university has been eliminated from the face of the earth.'

"'You can learn, can you? Very well. I'll give you permission to enter my works as an apprentice, if you have any one to support you while you are learning, for we give no wages the first year.'

"'No. I can't do that. I must have wages. That's what I'm here for.'

"'Then answer my question. What can you do?'

"The old man brought his fist down on the desk again at the word 'do,' and seemed to think he had ended the matter. I have since thought that his bluster was largely due to the stirring of a partially extinct conscience. The text 'Am I my brother's keeper?' must have been vaguely echoing somewhere in his brain, for I had been a guest in his house, and after all I was only asking a

chance to earn my bread. I was not using my knowledge of his residence to burglarise it. On my part I vaguely understood that I was being asked the universal question, and my answer to it was far from complete. What could I do? with a strong emphasis on the last word.

"As I came in, or rather during my long term of waiting I noticed a broom standing in the corner, and since entering I had seen that the office was not kept as spick and span as most New York offices I was acquainted with. I turned without a word and went to the door. I heard the old man laugh in an uneasy sort of way, as if glad to be at last rid of me, and yet not comfortable at his success in the clearance. I returned, however, a moment later, with the broom in my hand, and began to sweep, raising a dust that made the old carriage-builder wheeze and cough and choke, sputtering and sneezing, trying to speak and not succeeding, while the room was speedily in a haze of dust. At last he roared:

"'What the devil do you mean by that, sir? Are you here to insult me in my own office, or have you gone crazy?'

"'Neither, sir. I want to show you two things. First, how badly kept your private room is; second, that I can sweep. There's one answer to your question. I can sweep and do it better than the capable person who is occupying this particular ten square feet of space in your ninety thousand.'

"The old man pondered over this for a few moments, but I could not flatter myself that there was any melting in his attitude toward me. However, he called for a clerk and held a brief consultation with him. My heart jumped, thinking I was going to get a desk in the large outer office, filled with young men and a sprinkling of older ones. When the clerk went out Bonsel turned to me and said:

"'Then you are willing to take the job of sweeping out the offices?'

"'Yes, or the whole building.'

"'I can do better than that for you. We are in need of a hand or two in the paint shop. I suppose you can at

least do the priming as well as anybody else. It doesn't require any brains, only the wagging of a paint brush. But that brush has to wag right along during working hours. I don't have any loafers about these premises.'

"'All right, sir, and thank you.'

"'The wages will be six dollars a week. Is that satisfactory?'

"'Quite.'

"'You will understand that your remaining here or your advancement in my shop will depend entirely on yourself. If the foreman bounces you the bouncing will doubtless be for good cause, and there is no use in coming whining to me for reinstatement.'

"'I shall not ask you to interfere.'

"'I have just sent for the foreman of the priming department in the paint shop, so that you will hear exactly what I say to him concerning you, and thus there won't be any mistake.'

"'An excellent and straightforward plan, sir.'

"'You came to me; I didn't send for you, so perhaps it will not be necessary to say that at my house we do not recognise the paint-shop. Understand what I mean?'

"'Perfectly, and I am very glad such is the rule, for I sold my last dress suit in order to get the money to come here.'

"At this point Billy Laffin came in, holding his cap in his hand. He was the foreman of the priming department in the paint shop and an unmistakable Irishman, with a tuft of chin whiskers that was, perhaps, intended to give him an Uncle Sam air, but which, somehow, spoke more eloquently of the Emerald Isle than any other feature of his face, unless it was his long, smoothly shaven upper lip. Humble as was his demeanour in the eyes of the boss he cast a glance at me which showed me in an instant that here was a man who could make it pretty nasty for me, and probably would. I say, boys, I'm making too long a story of this. A man gets garrulous when he spins a yarn about himself, showing our natural conceit. I'll cut the cackle, as the saying is."

"No, no," cried Ben eagerly, speaking for the first

time. "It's the most interesting story I've ever listened to. Yes, more interesting than anything I have ever read—just the kind of talk I want to hear. Don't omit the slightest detail."

"I second that," said Jim. "It fits us like a coat cut to measure, and I take advantage of the lull to apologise for what I said about your having had a better start than we have."

"Well, the monotony of the journey may excuse the length of the story. Old Bonsel said to his foreman, 'Laffin, this young chap is just out of college, and he wants a job in the paint shop. He's to get six dollars a week—if he shows that he is worth ten dollars to the shop. I want you to understand that although I put him in the place I don't keep him there. Whether he stays or not depends entirely on whether or not he is worth more than the money we give him. Do you understand, Laffin?'

"'I do thot, sor.'

"'No favouritism you know; you can discharge him to-morrow if he don't suit, and you'll never hear of it from me.'

"'Has the yong mon anny axpaarience in painting, sor?'

"'Not an atom. Put him at the priming.'

"'I beg your pardon, Mr. Bonsel,' I interrupted, 'but I helped to paint my yacht once at the Bermudas. We had a kind of a strike among the crew led by a dissatisfied countryman of Mr. Laffin's here; they sort of took advantage of the fact that we were in a foreign port, and I sort of showed them a specimen of American independence. The painting was well done, and as my yacht cost a hundred thousand dollars and as your carriages are hardly so expensive, I think I can give satisfaction to Mr. Laffin and the firm.'

"Billy's eyes opened wide at the mention of the yacht, and then partially closed to two malignant slits as he sized me up with no favouring glance. His fist clenched nervously and I said to myself, 'I'm going to have trouble with this man.' It was not a diplomatic begin-

ning with my new master, but I was getting very tired of the good Mr. Bonsel's attitude. Bonsel, however, did not resent my impertinence, at least audibly; he merely said to Laffin:

"'He's the son of that speculator, Mitchell, of New York, who went smash the other day, and it's more than likely before long that we'll have to put the factory on short time, if the panic continues. Take him away, Laffin.'

"Laffin and I walked through the outer office and over to the paintshop in silence. In one corner of the large room, in which a number of parts of buggies were getting their first coat of priming, there was walled off a little office for the foreman. Into this Laffin led me, and closing the door behind him turned to me.

"'See here, me yong sprig,—' he began, truculently.

"'Wait a moment, Laffin. You think you're going to do the talking, but you're mistaken. It's I. Just feel the muscle in that arm.' I extended my arm, drawing up my clenched fist to my shoulder. Billy stood there, with angry brow and dropped jaw, but made no motion to accept my invitation. 'There is strength, which counts for something; not very much, but behind that is science, which makes all the difference in the world. I could outbox any man at Yale. I have been before now pitted against a professional, and my backers didn't lose their bets. Now six dollars a week is necessary to me just at present, but it's no great snap, and the moment you begin any petty tyranny over me I'll draw back and knock you into the middle of next week—yes, if you have one hundred of your men about you—and then I'll clean out the shop if any one of them objects. They may slug me from behind with a hickory spoke, but they won't be able to do it with their fists. Anyhow, the rear spoke won't help you. You'll be flat, never knowing what hit you.'

"'Ye cheeky divil,' roared Billy, 'd'ye mane to threaten me in my own affice? D'ye think I care whether yer father was a—'

"'No, I know you don't. But that brings me to the second thing I've got to say. I'm to work for six dollars a week, but it won't be for long. I'm of the breed of

the hawk. My father was a millionaire, and it's not so long ago that he could have bought this factory, lock, stock and barrel, given it away as a present and never felt the cost. His ship has gone down in a cyclone, worse luck for me, but mine's coming in from some well-stocked port. I'll be a millionaire, too, and when I am, or before it, the first strike I make I'm going to look you up, Billy, and you'll be a richer man when I leave you if you prove a decent master to me while you are my master. I'll do whatever you tell me. If you want a buggy painted sky blue, with green stripes, I'll paint it just as you say. You can make it mighty uncomfortable for me if you like, and I'll stand it all without a whimper, up to a certain point. But if you treat me like a white man it will be the best investment you ever made.'

"'All right,' said Laffin, with great good nature. 'Come along and I'll find ye a blouse to put over yer store clothes.'

"I lifted the mortgage from Laffin's house a few years later and gave him a thousand dollars additional. So you see we got along well together.

"Sometimes on the street I met Mr. Bonsel, but not often. He never recognised me, and I never saluted him. I did my work well, if I do say so, and before long found a ten-dollar bill in my Saturday envelope, for which perhaps I had to thank Laffin more than my real employer. I had but one more brief conversation with Mr. Bonsel until the time I negotiated with him for the sale of his works, two years ago, when I turned the business into a limited company, for his son showed more aptitude for spending money than making, and Bonsel, getting old, wished to be relieved of business worry and possess his wealth in hard cash. The son did what little he could to justify his father's contempt for college men. The old man wandered about the town after the conversion of his business, like a man who had lost himself, never being able to realise that he had no further voice in the affairs of the concern he had built up.

"He died in a few months, I verily believe, of having nothing to do, and the son, although old enough to know

better, has made the dollars fly, and is now somewhere abroad.

"Well, as I was saying, I found myself in the old man's office once more.

"'What do you want?' he asked me gruffly. 'I'm not here to listen to complaints, and the times don't justify a raise in wages.'

"'Both of these things I know,' replied I, 'and the fact that competition is keen makes it incumbent on a proprietor to take every advantage he can to save money, as well as to make it. In the repair shops, when paint is taken from an old wheel, they burn it off with a blow flame, which is not only a slow method but an unsatisfactory one. The flame doesn't clean the wheel very well, and the heat starts the joints. I learned something of chemistry in college, and I have been experimenting since. I have a liquid into which you put an old wheel, take it out, stand it up to dry, then shake it, and the paint comes off, leaving the hickory white and clean as a weather-bleached bone.'

"'I've heard that sort of nonsense before.'

"'Yes; but this nonsense works.'

"'You've been wasting my time and material fooling about with old wheels, have you? And now you have the impudence to come to me, thinking I will put up good money on that kind of folly. You're mistaken. I turn away humbugging inventors from these doors every day in the week.'

"'Perhaps that's why your rival, the Connecticut Spoke Company, is getting on so well. I want you to be my partner in this invention. If you furnish the money to patent it I will give you a half share.'

"The injudicious reference to the Spoke Company put a spoke in my wheel, for the old man hated the new firm with a virulence that almost brought on apoplexy when any one mentioned it. He ordered me out of the office and told me never again to enter it unless I was sent for. As a matter of fact, it was Laffin, the foreman, who lent me the two hundred dollars necessary to protect the invention and go to New York to place it. He was a practical

man and saw at once the merit of the idea. I got the firm of Glassthrop & Co., company promoters, patent agents and all that, to handle this invention for me, and they did their duty well, making money for themselves and for me, too. My first cheque was for twelve thousand dollars, and I've had many a one since. By rather a funny coincidence Glassthrop's man called on old Bonsel and tried to sell him state rights. Bonsel treated the proposal with great contempt, and said he had a workman in his factory who had been doing a similar trick for years. This naturally alarmed the New York man, who began to see ahead of him lawsuits for infringement of patents, or, at the mildest, his own patent invalidated. He begged Bonsel to send for this workman, and I was ordered up from the paint shop in my spotted Joseph's coat of many colours. When I told you a moment ago that I had had but one interview with the old man, I had forgotten this brief and exciting visit. I recognised Glassthrop's man at once, but it was some moments before he knew me as the young man who had called with the invention at his office in New York. He seemed anxious when I came in, but laughed with evident relief when he recollected me.

"'O, that's all right,' he exclaimed; 'this is the young man who placed the invention in our hands in New York.'

"'When were you in New York?' thundered Bonsel.

"I told him. He raged round, saying that I had been using the time he paid for to further my own ends. I called his attention to the fact that I had not received money for the days I had been off, but that did nothing to allay the storm. He discharged me on the spot and ordered the New York man out of the office.

"'It doesn't matter, Mr. Mitchell,' said the latter; 'your patent has been sold for a considerable sum in Indiana, so we'll see you through.'

"I went back to the shop to bid good-bye to Laffin and the boys, and the New Yorker went over to the office of the Spoke Company and succeeded in disposing of the rights for Connecticut.

"I joined the New York firm, and am now one of the

company. Thus I am in a box car making my way to Chicago to conclude a big deal there, and so we come to the end of a long story, which is merely the beginning of a life to which you have both listened with exemplary patience."

The low rumble of the freight train had formed an accompaniment to the recital in a continuous monotone. Jim sat statuesquely through it all, but during the latter part Ben had arisen and was pacing back and forth in some excitement, running his fingers now and then through his long fair hair, which badly needed cutting. His eyes shone in the semi-gloom of the car, and when the raconteur stopped talking Ben threw out his hands and cried:

"Mr. Mitchell, there's the hand of Providence in this. God directed me to take this train, and I knew we were to meet someone who would show us the way."

Mitchell looked up surprised at this outburst, a cold business gleam in his eye, the unenthusiastic glance of a man who does not care to see the trail of sense obliterated or obscured by the antics of hysteria. Jim, whose trend of mind led him towards appreciation of the stranger's standpoint, rather than towards sympathy with his friend's cloud-like altitude, interrupted:

"Hold up, Ben, hold up. You know nothing of the kind. You said that if a brakeman threw us off the train that would be an indication of the wishes of Providence, to which proposition I demurred, holding it would be merely a manifestation on the part of the railroad company that it did not wish to forego its legal fare."

Ben turned upon his comrade aglow with indignation.

"How is the Lord to show His will except through incidents which we, in our blindness, regard as trivial?"

"I'm sure I can't pretend to tell you, Ben."

"Very well, then; don't attempt to make up for lack of knowledge or thought by sneering. Yesterday it was impossible for me to predict in what form His guidance would come; this morning I simply recognise what I see. Yes, Mr. Mitchell," he continued, impulsively, turning to the stranger, "we are the two young men you have been looking for."

There was a marked absence of emotion in Mr. Mitchell's reply.

"Really? You will pardon me, but I did not know I was looking for anyone."

"That is very likely. I didn't know I was looking for you, but such is the case. Everybody is on the outlook for someone who will sell him five dollars' worth for a dollar."

"That's true. What's your five-dollar article?"

"It is not one article but several that we have to dispose of. Sterling honesty, for example. Is that to be picked up every day?"

"I don't suppose it is, still it is one of the most valueless things on the market. We take our precautions against dishonesty. I always say that if a man is able to cheat me he may."

"You place no value on honesty?"

"Very little. I find it usually goes with incurable dulness. Of course you are talking now of coming into my employ; I don't pretend to misunderstand you. You want your chance, as you say, and you think you have met a man who may perhaps be able to offer you an opportunity. I am not sure that I can, but we will let that question rest for a moment. As the merchants say, it is no trouble to show goods, and the first web you unfold on the counter is honesty. It is a fine old pattern, and much praised in moral books; but I would rather have a smart, resourceful young man who would defraud me if he could than a slow, honest person. I'd see that he didn't get the better of me, and I should profit by his expertness in a crisis."

McAllister had never met such sentiments before, and they took him by surprise, so he stood there confounded, with no reply ready. It was Monro who took up the conversation very quietly.

"That's the right way to talk, now that we are getting close to Chicago."

"You think there isn't much honesty in Chicago? I guess you're not far wrong."

"You mistake me. I have no doubt that Chicago, like

any other large city, has a great deal more honesty in it than it gets credit for. I was only referring to the fact that I see through the chinks of both doors and we are already at the scattered ring fence of the place, and so I compliment you on the appropriateness of your talk to my friend."

"I must confess I don't see the drift of your remarks."

"Why, it's plain enough. You are talking of resourcefulness as if you possessed it and Ben didn't."

"O, pardon me. I said nothing against any lack in either of you; I couldn't speak of what I have no knowledge, and I may say without self-flattery that I am considered rather a good hand at a pinch."

"I disagree with both your propositions. In the first place, you have knowledge of Ben's resourcefulness; and in the second place, there was little of brains displayed in a pinch by the man on the platform of a way station with a valise in his hand some hours ago. He was going to the caboose, to be flung out, valise and all, on the road as soon as he was discovered there. Until Ben's resourceful hand helped you into this box car you were a ditched train, and so, as I say, it's all right for you to talk big, now that, through no ingenuity of your own, you are at the edge of Chicago."

Mr. Mitchell laughed heartily and seemed in no way offended by the outspoken bluntness of his critic.

"That's the way to talk," he said. "I like that method of expressing one's self much better than any canting on the ways of Providence, or boasting of immaculate morals. Yes, you are right. That's the kind of goods to show if you want to make a sale. Now, what else have you to offer?"

Ben, being directly addressed by this query and having, in sporting phrase, recovered his second wind, replied with some diminution of his former enthusiasm:

"Well, I think we can claim for ourselves indefatigable energy. We're not afraid of work. If we get a dollar a day we'll try to earn five for the man who pays us."

"Ah, that's first-class negotiable goods. Won't wash though. Doesn't keep its colour. You won't be long in

that frame of mind, my friend, although I think many of us begin that way, and it's not a bad beginning. By and by you will come to the conclusion that you may as well have the extra four dollars as the boss, and you will be quite right. It's every man for himself in this day and age. You claim honesty and industry, and you have proven ability in a crisis. What else have you to offer?"

Monro took the word from his friend's earnest mouth.

"We have to offer you a chance of getting out of this box car without either breaking your neck or running into the arms of authority. We've stopped for a moment at a crossing. Throw open both doors and spring out to the left. The watchman on the left will imagine that we have leaped the barrier and come through the train. Anyone who is on the lookout on the right will not be able to see us until the train moves on."

The locomotive, far in front, was whistling in short toots impatient at the delay. Against a barrier across the street on the right an early morning crowd had collected, many with dinner-pails in their hands, and were pressed together like logs in a jam. The three sprang out and made for the barrier at the left to get on the main road.

"Stop that, stop that!" cried the watchman, angrily, rushing to intercept them.

"It's all right," said Mitchell, suavely, slipping half a dollar into the man's hand. "We're in rather a hurry. Where's the nearest street car?"

"It's over there beyant the saloon," growled the watchman. "Ye'll thry that thrick once too aften and get a leg taken aff ye."

A moment later they were seated in the street car, jingling on toward the centre of the city.

"Another sample of resource," said Mitchell with a smile.

"It's for sale," said Jim, and the elder man laughed outright.

CHAPTER XI

"THEY ARE THRIFTY, HONEST MEN"

THE street car jogged its leisurely way through a most uninteresting, scattered district; wooden shanties, wooden houses, and here and there a brick building at a corner, standing high above its surroundings, the upper stories with a deserted look about the windows, evidence of some sanguine man's premature belief in the rapid expansion of the city. At first the street car line was elevated above a dirt road from whose uneven surface every passing vehicle raised clouds of grey dust, then came pavement, and the plank sidewalk seemed less ragged, while the houses were higher and closer together. Now and then they passed a bit of uneven stone sidewalk, the broad flags left as they had been heaved by the frost of last winter or the winter before.

Mitchell sat silent, in his corner, and the young men, feeling sleepy and up-all-nightish, had little inclination to talk. All were grimed with dust and cinders, and early though it was the pavements were sending up a dry, exhausting heat. The car had left its terminus practically empty as the freight train had crossed its custom and held back its passengers, but as it went on it soon filled. Mitchell sat in the corner at the rear door, with his eye continually questioning the street. At last he saw an empty carriage drive from one of the side residence avenues into the broad thoroughfare down which ran the car line. Through the open window he hailed the driver.

"Are you engaged?"

"No, sir."

"Then I've got three passengers for you."

He stopped the car and grasped his valise.

"Come on, boys," he said quickly, like one accustomed to obedience.

"I guess we'll ride down in the car," replied Jim, without moving. "We're in no hurry. Where can we meet you later in the day?"

"Come on, come on," he cried impatiently; "we can't talk here. Don't you see others are waiting for your seat? Come on."

He pushed through the standing crowd on the platform, stepped off and handed up his valise to the driver of the cab. "Palmer House," he said shortly. McAllister had followed him, and Jim reluctant had followed Ben. The car went on.

"Jump in, jump in! I'm hungry."

When the three were seated, the carriage speedily passed the street car.

"We're not going to the Palmer House," said Jim, at last.

"You think you're not, but you are, all the same. It's unlikely after I've been your guest part of the night that you're not going to be mine at breakfast. There may be better restaurants in this country than the one at the Palmer House, but I'll guarantee they will get us up a presentable breakfast this morning if we go about it the right way. I take it you have no previous appointment, and to me breakfast is the most important event in the immediate future."

"We're not just dressed in a style suitable for—"

"Don't let that worry you. Just thank God you've got an appetite. Besides, I think you want to have a little business talk with me, eh? So I supposed. Well, the only time I shall have to spare will be from the present moment until breakfast time. After that you can do what you please."

They were now in the roar and rush of the feverish city, and presently the carriage drew up at the portal of the huge hotel.

A sprightly negro sprang out and seized the valise. Mitchell paid the cabman, briefly, with the air of a man who knows what is the right thing to do and does it, cut-

ting off all discussion, if any is attempted, by turning abruptly and following the laden coloured man.

"I want the best room that's vacant in the house," he said to the dignified imperturbable clerk at the desk.

"No. 17," remarked the latter, quietly, taking down a key with a metal flange loosely attached to it and giving it to a negro, who took the bag from the hall porter. "I think No. 17 will suit you, Mr. Mitchell."

"Has it a bath-room attached?"

"Certainly. Just arrived, Mr. Mitchell?"

"Yes."

"Why, what train did you come on?"

"Special."

"Ah."

Mitchell, with a word to his new acquaintances to follow him, threaded his way through the lofty rotunda, already thronged with people, until the negro unlocked the door of No. 17 and waved them into a large bedroom, with a dressing-room and bath-room adjoining.

"Look here, nigger," said Mitchell sharply when the menial had unstrapped the valise, "how many persons are staying at this hotel?"

"I dunno, sah."

"Well, it doesn't so much matter how many there are, as long as you remember that the whole lot of them won't be as good to you as I will if you amount to a row of pins. Just feel the texture of that, nigger!"

The white man handed the black man a five-dollar bill, and the grin of the latter broadened, as he gave vent to a loud "Yeh, yeh, yeh!" He rubbed the paper between finger and thumb, saying: "Yet's got a nice com'fubel feel 'bout it, sah."

"Yes, it has, and the comfortable feel will increase if you put it safely into your pocket. Now, that's a beginning, and see here, nigger, whenever No. 17 drops in the office indicator, what are you going to do? Scratch your head and meditate awhile, and then come loitering through the halls and tap at the wrong door."

"Deed I ain't, misteh; I'm going to fly right here to dis room quick!"

" That's right. Now turn on the water into the bath-tub, and see that there's plenty of towels. The average man wants, we will say, five; I want fifteen."

The black man showed no resentment at being called " nigger," although in law he was equal to the person who had so lavishly tipped him. When he returned, the sound of pouring water following him, Mitchell said: " Bring three whisky cocktails, unless you would rather drink something else, gentlemen. If so, name your poison."

" We don't drink," said the two young men together.

" Well, it's a bit early, but after our ride I don't think it would hurt. No? All right. One cocktail, nigger." The nigger seemed to tumble over his big feet in his hurry to be quit of the room.

" Now, boys," said Mitchell, as he threw off his coat and hung it up, " I'm not going to make company of you a bit. You sit down and look cheerful. I'm going in for a swim, if the water's liquid enough for me to sink in. In St. Louis or Louisville it's generally mud, but out of the lake here it ought to be reasonably refreshing." His braces were dangling in loops at his hips as the waiter came in with the cocktail, which he sampled with an appreciative sip, then drank off at a toss. " That's grateful and comforting. I say, nigger, is Tom still head waiter in the restaurant?"

" O, yes, seh. Couldn't get along without Tom nohow, seh."

" Very good. Now you go to Tom and tell him John L. Mitchell of New York is here, hungrier than ever he was in his life before. I suggest frogs' legs and grilled prairie chicken, if either bird is in season. And, to begin with, if he's got any nice ripe early nutmeg melons, just have 'em filled up with pounded ice. Tell him I leave it all to him, and that he'll never have an easier victim to work on, for my appetite will assist him. I expect him to look after the coffee himself. Breakfast for three, and send a messenger to room 17 as soon as he is ready."

Again the colored gentleman broke from the room with a delirious haste that was comical to behold.

" There is no country in the world," came the voice of

Mitchell from within the folds of an overhead shirt, "where they make better coffee than right here in these United States. Talk of the coffee of France! It doesn't compare with the best in America, when you strike a cook who knows how to make it."

The last words came from the bath-room, and a moment later there was the sound of a plunge and a wallowing.

"Whew! This is fine. I say, boys, don't stand on ceremony, but throw off and prepare for the swimming hole. You'll feel a hundred per cent. better. I'll be out in a minute, and there will be lots of time before breakfast."

Jim laughed. "I'll take that offer," he said, "Ben, after you. No; go ahead. I'll follow."

It was the head waiter himself who came to announce breakfast, and he found all the three men anxiously awaiting him, thoroughly refreshed by their immersion in the cool water of the lake.

The sumptuousness of the breakfast-room, the splendour of the china service and silver dishes, the choiceness of the food, the deftness of the waiting, all impressed the unaccustomed young men as rivalling anything they had ever read or imagined regarding banqueting, and they could not understand why a dyspeptic-looking man at a table near them was querulously complaining that, with the single exception of a nickel restaurant in Waco, Tex., this was the very worst eating house on the American continent. To the boys it seemed that the restaurant was an exemplification of the extreme to which luxury in living could extend, while the delicacy of the viands surpassed their wildest dreams. Here was what wealth could do, and wealth was what they were after. "It isn't bad, you know, for a hurried snack," said Mitchell, as he did the honours of the table. "If I'd known I was going to have company and had been sure of reaching Chicago, I'd have telegraphed to Tom last night, and then you should have seen the layout that would have awaited us. Still, with a good appetite even a Chicago restaurant is possible."

Here was exemplified the superciliousness of the east thought the young men to themselves, for they doubted if

New York or Boston could have anything better to offer. They gave no expression to their admiration and wonder, but took it all as a matter of course, with the imperturbability of the American under unusual conditions, a trait which perhaps the climate imparts, as it imparted the gift of repression to the original inhabitant, the red man. During the meal Mitchell showed no inclination to talk business, but conversed airily on fishing and hunting in the north woods, the excellent breakfasts of the camp and the delights of a pipe over a log fire when evening fell in the forest, by the side of some placid lake or brawling river. He appeared to possess great knowledge of woodcraft and of wild life, and his wanderings with rod and gun had taken him far afield. As he talked in most entertaining and instructive fashion, the young men began to feel rather overawed, and it was difficult to imagine that this was the man who, but a short time before, was sitting, somewhat unkempt, on a strapped valise in an empty grain car. There was now a fresh, spick-and-spanness about him that was almost foppish, and, although there was nothing in his raiment to particularise, his guests felt rather than saw that he was the best-dressed man in the room. His clear-cut face lit up wonderfully with enthusiasm over the pleasures to be had in forest and stream, and they were at their ease with him largely because they saw he enjoyed their appreciation of his interesting conversation. He talked away all their self-consciousness, which might have embarrassed them if they had opportunity to think that their own garb, never of artistic cut, and unimproved by tramping along country roads in the summer dust, was decidedly incongruous amidst their present surroundings.

When this never-to-be-forgotten breakfast was finished, Mitchell led the way to his own room again, lit a cigar and threw himself into the most comfortable armchair that the apartment contained.

" Now, young men," he said, " I can give you ten minutes, and during that time I will do most of the talking. In the first place, how much money have you? "

Jim and Ben looked at each other, as if in doubt who should be the spokesman, then the former said:

"Well, Mr. Mitchell, we are rated in Bradstreet at between twenty-five and thirty dollars."

The New Yorker blew a balloon of smoke in the air, and laughed the good-natured laugh of a well-fed man.

"Twenty-five each, or between you?"

"Twenty-five is the combined wealth of the syndicate."

"Rather undercapitalised I should say for a Chicago syndicate. Now one of my maxims in life is never to believe a man is going to sign what he says he will sign, put up the amount of cash he says he will put up, or in short do what he says he will do. Thus I am never disappointed. When a man comes up to his promise, it is all pure gain, and when he doesn't, then it's only what I expected. Thus is disappointment eliminated from life, and all our surprises are pleasant surprises, a consummation devoutly to be wished. What do you boys expect from me?"

"Nothing, so there is no necessity of hedging."

"I wasn't hedging so much as laying down a basis for future action—future possibilities of action rather. Blessed is he who expects nothing. In the first place I don't know that I can do anything. Much will depend on my partner, in fact I may call him my chief, who rarely leaves New York. If he consents to employ you, it will be first on some forlorn hope. He will set you at something where another man has failed. Now the most discouraging thing in the world is to go over ground where some fool has bungled. Would you be willing to tackle such a job?"

"We'll tackle anything, but perhaps it would help on a mutual understanding if you would tell us just what the business is: what we would be expected to do."

Mitchell smoked for a few moments in silence, chuckling to himself quietly.

"I was just wondering to myself how long it would be before you asked that very important and leading question. I have been admiring the supreme confidence of youth, ready to precipitate itself into the unknown, certain of success. Very well, our firm is a growing firm. By and

by we hope that if they want to transform Chicago into a limited liability company we can undertake the task with the same feeling of modest competence that you display in offering to link your fortunes with ours. At present we take up a promising patent, we will say. If it is a small thing like my own invention, we send glib-tongued, persuasive young men to the leading manufacturers and sell state rights; if it is a big thing by some world-renowned scientist, we form state companies; in either case we try to make something in ready cash for ourselves. Now, if you think you are able to form a state company for, let us say, a new patent fire-escape, you go to the most expensive hotel in the city where you expect to operate, you interview the big men of the place, you quietly distribute quantities of stock at your disposal where it will do the most good. Then the dear public, seeing these leading men in the thing, expecting to get in on the ground floor, take up the stock for sale, and there you are. If enough of them bite, you succeed; if not, you fail, and have a big bill to pay at your hotel. That's a rough outline of our scheme; what do you think of it?"

"Are these companies—do they—well, are they usually successful; that is, do they pay the people who risk their money?" asked Ben, suspiciously.

"You mean are they swindles? O, bless you, no. We couldn't keep an office open at that rate. They are sometimes overcapitalised, sometimes mismanaged, sometimes successful, but we endeavour to have nothing to do with any scheme that is bogus."

"If we were to undertake the forming of one of your companies and failed, would we have to stand the loss of our expenses?"

"Certainly."

"Can you get people to work on those terms?"

"Hundreds of them."

"Well, that counts us out. However willing we might be, we are the people who don't buy Chicago because we haven't the boots."

"Well, that's the way it struck me. You wanted a show, and that's the kind of show we have to offer to an outside man who believes in himself."

"O, you are not offering a show; you're offering an investment or a speculation, and we don't happen to have the money to invest or to speculate. I should guess offhand that in a business like yours there must be something for two young men to do by which they can earn money rather than risk it, and in the doing of their work give some indication of their abilities, if they have any. That's what I call a show, and if you have nothing like that to offer then there's no use of us taking up any more of your time."

"All right. What I want to impress on you is that you are to expect nothing. Anyhow, I'll write a letter about you to-night, and when you show up in New York they'll know at the office who you are; then, if you expect nothing, anything you get will be clear gain. How will that suit you? Now the next question is that of ways and means. Of course, I don't expect you to work your way to New York on a freight train, however expert you may be at doing so. Besides, it's slow, and the man who gets along nowadays is the man who is quick. I propose to give you each a hundred dollars. How will that suit you?"

"You mean as a loan?" asked Ben.

"I mean it any way you like to take it. Yes, as a loan. You may pay it back whenever you are ready to do so."

"I think that is playing it rather low down on you, after such a short acquaintance, and I don't just like to—"

"What's the use of talking like that, Ben," interrupted Jim, with a suspicion of impatience in his voice. "We've got to have the money, or we can't live in New York when we get there, even if we roughed it through to the place. I hate to take the loan as badly as the next man, but it will be paid back all right enough. I guess Mr. Mitchell has no doubt on that head, but even if he has I imagine if we had held him up last night and demanded two hundred dollars to get him into Chicago he would have forked it over."

"That's exactly the basis I'm going on. I would willingly have given five hundred dollars, so, you see, I'm

in three hundred on the deal, and you need have no qualms about taking the money. I put it on the basis of a loan to please you, for I see you are a trifle sensitive in the matter; a condition of mind that will speedily rectify itself before you are long in New York. Very well, here is the money."

He counted it out from a long pocketbook, which held the bills without the necessity of folding, and the boys saw that he was well provided.

" Now, although you are in possession of my name, I don't think I have heard yours. Mr. McAllister, eh? And Mr. Monro. Thanks. Now, Mr. McAllister, let me give you a word of advice. When you meet my partner, James Glassthrop, you will meet the shrewdest business man in this pretty large country. Do not play off on him any of that ranting about God of which you gave me a specimen in the car. He would merely think you were crazy or were trying some game on him, and in either case he wouldn't like it. I have no doubt you were and are perfectly sincere, but then, you see, I travel round the country and meet all sorts of people. James Glassthrop doesn't, and I don't believe he thinks God has much to do with business, if he thinks of the matter at all."

" One of the commands of the Lord is to be diligent in business," said Ben, reddening under the cool contempt of the other's tone.

" Quite so, quite so," replied Mitchell, nonchalantly, " you can't get me into any theological discussion. It isn't in my line, and I've no doubt you could floor me with texts if it came to a contest of that kind. I'm merely giving you a friendly hint, which you can use or not just as it pleases you. If you want my opinion, it's against you. I think there is a time for everything and that the time for scriptural quotations is not during a business conversation."

" But don't you think, sir, that our business conduct should be regu——"

" When do you propose to start for New York?"

" I start to-night," answered Jim, decisively.

"That's the way to talk. I suppose you will travel together?"

Both looked at Ben, who made no reply. He stood there with his eyes fixed on the floor, chagrined, Mitchell thought, at his recent rebuff, but Jim spoke up with a laugh.

"I think the Lord wants Ben to go down to see his girl in Central Illinois."

Mitchell smiled, and Ben darted an angry glance at his traitorous companion.

"I'm going down to see my girl, as you put it, because I want to go. Have you any objection?"

"I haven't," said Jim, calmly, "as long as you are in New York within the week."

"You have no girl to go to see then?" asked the elder man.

"Not likely," replied Jim, with decision. "I want to see some money coming in before I indulge in a luxury of that sort. Ben here always was an idealist, with a faith in the future which is sublime."

"Well, here is the address of the firm, and these cards will serve as letters of introduction." Mitchell wrote a word or two on the cards and handed them to the young men, rising as he did so.

"I expect to reach New York in about a week. I shall perhaps see you there. Good-bye." Thus dismissed, they left him, and he took a book from his valise which had every second page perforated. He inserted between the first two leaves a sheet of carbon paper and wrote in duplicate:

"DEAR GLASSTHROP—I think I have the two men we want. One of them will call on you about the time you receive this; the other a few days later. I believe them to be honest, and expect them to remain so long enough to serve our turn; however, do not take my judgment of them as final. Test them for yourself, and then engage them or dismiss them according to the conclusion you arrive at. Their names are McAllister and Monro.

Yours,
JOHN L. MITCHELL.

BOOK II

THE FOOT OF THE SLOPE

CHAPTER I

"JOURNEYS END IN LOVERS' MEETING"

ILLINOIS is flat enough and fertile enough and unpicturesque enough, but, like every other state, it has its beauty spots. In one of these, at the side of a pretty dingle, stood the schoolhouse of district No. 4, distant two miles and a half from the town of Stormboro, yet a secluded spot, with no suggestion of any human habitation near it.

School had been dismissed for the day, and the teacher, a fair-haired girl of twenty or thereabouts, sat at her desk absorbed in examining the writing exercises of her pupils. Door and windows were open, for the afternoon was warm and the slight current of air which played with some wisps of hair about her forehead was refreshing in its caressing coolness. The silence was intense, and it seemed to the girl that she was entirely alone in a world of stillness. Gradually, however, a subtle sense of human companionship stole over her, and, without knowing why, she looked suddenly up and was startled to see a man standing like a statue in the doorway. With a quick gasp of alarm she rose to her feet; then recognised her visitor as he came forward with a laugh.

"O, Ben!" she cried, "how you frightened me. Where on earth did you spring from? I thought you were in Michigan."

"No, Connie," replied our radiant young acquaintance, advancing up the aisle. "I'm school inspector in Illinois. Spring from? I didn't spring at all. I've been prowling round this exasperating schoolhouse for hours—for hours Connie; lying low in the woods yonder, playing the giddy savage among the trees. I feel like a character out of one of Fenimore Cooper's novels. And then, when those tiresome children were gone, I stole up to this edifice with all the craft of a Sioux."

"But why didn't you come in long ago? Visitors are always allowed at public schools."

"I knew you wouldn't like it, Con, and so I sacrificed myself. With all those little gossips about, a man has to use circumspection. Well, my darling girl, how are you?"

"O Ben, Ben, don't! Please be careful; some one may be looking in at the windows."

"There's no danger, Connie. This place is as deserted as the Sahara. However, I'll make sure."

"O Ben, what are you doing?"

Ben's design was soon evident enough. He took the key from the outside of the door to the inside, and locked himself and his fair companion in. Then, going swiftly from one window to another, he unloosened the cords and allowed each of the thick paper blinds to drop its full length. These shades displayed a background of deep blue, and on this background had been printed in gaudy colours impossible landscapes and waterscapes, heavily laid on.

"Ben, this is simply scandalous! What if someone should come?"

"My dear, that is the very contingency I am guarding against. Let 'em come. They can't get in, nor look in."

The room was now suffused with a bluish gloom, mitigated by a suggestion of crimson or yellow from the western blinds, on which shone the declining afternoon sun.

"Why, what a hasty, inconsiderate person you are, Ben! The windows are still up, and any one outside has only to shove aside the blind, and then what will they think of their schoolma'am? I'm amazed at you."

"That's so," agreed Ben. "We'll remedy the defect in a minute," and he closed the windows. "Now we're secure. My sweetest girl, let me look at you." He took both her unresisting hands in his, and gazed with glorified face into hers. "Why, Constance, you're actually pale. You've been overworking yourself."

"Anyone would be pale to be captured in this brigand fashion."

He took her impulsively in his arms and smothered all protest, if there were protest. Dear me, children, it was just as well you went home, and quite time, too. It would have shocked your little innocent hearts to have seen grown-up people act in this silly fashion. And who could have imagined that the demure school teacher would have permitted such goings-on for a moment! Not I, and certainly not you.

"Now, Ben, behave yourself, and sit down. Please act like a rational being." It was time some censure was passed upon him. "Here, take my chair—it's the only one in the room—and I'll stand at the desk before you. You are the schoolmaster now, and I the pupil. Please tell me all about yourself and your doings. Has the peddling been a failure, then?"

"A rank failure, Connie. No, I won't sit in the chair. You take the chair. Oh, you must do as I tell you. I'm the guest, you know, and it isn't hospitable to refuse the request of a visitor. I beg to inform you, Miss Constance Fraser, I should like to go to this school. I feel the need of more education, and I just envy your pupils. That's right. You look like a queen on her throne, Connie; I suppose all the little ruffians in the neighbourhood are in love with you. Well, how do you like teaching?"

"Oh, I like it very much, and, if I do say so myself, I get along creditably with it. But tell me about yourself. Is Jim with you yet?"

"Jim's gone on to New York. We separated at Chicago, he going east and I south. I'm going east in a day or two, but I simply couldn't leave without coming first to see you, even if the fortunes of the country depended upon it. Do you walk home and back night and morning?"

"Yes. It's very pleasant. I bring my luncheon with me in a music roll, which acts useful and looks professional. Are you to join Jim in New York?"

"Yes. Oh, that's a very long story—a wonderful story, I think; but time's too precious to tell it now. Have you been as happy while teaching school as when attending college?"

"Oh, yes, quite. What are you two going to do in New York?"

"To do? I don't know what Jim's going to do, but I intend to provide a home for the most charming girl in Illinois."

"Really?" said Constance, laughing. "How nice that will be for the charming girl!"

"I hope so. I tell you what it is, Connie, I will be the best husband that ever was married to his best girl; now you'll see if I'm not. My wife shall have anything she wants—a fine house, lots of servants, a carriage, luxury, all that money can buy—and I'm going to make the money." He brought his fist down on the desk with a force that nearly split the lid. "Yes, sir, everything that money can buy. I feel just as certain of it as if I had the cash in my pocket at this moment."

The girl continued to laugh quietly, but very contentedly.

"Money isn't everything, Ben. It takes more than money to make a man the best husband, just as it takes more than plenty of servants and a fine house to make a woman the best wife, which I hope I shall be, although I will not put forth rash promises, that you may recall to me when I fail, or when you think I fail, which is the same thing."

"O Constance! You fail! I'll take the risk of the failure. All I ask is my chance to get along in the world, and then you'll see. We love each other, Connie; not for any money or lands that either of us possess, and that's the way the Lord intended people to love."

"We have little enough but ourselves," said the girl, soberly, "but I think with you that mutual affection is all-sufficient. Long may you believe so."

"I? I shall believe it while I live."

"Then so shall I, Ben."

"I tell you, Connie," cried the enthusiastic young man, running his fingers through his long, straw-coloured hair, a habit with him when he was up in the clouds, his usual altitude, "our married life will be one dream of heaven. Honestly, I am sorry for folks that aren't us two; I look on all the rest of paired humanity with gentle pity. Every fellow is to be pitied that isn't me, because, you see, I have you, and what can *his* possessions amount to?"

"O Bennie, my Bennie, it frightens me to hear you talk. What a disappointment will be yours if disappointment should come! I am afraid, a mere earthly person like me, to be brought into direct competition with the angels which your too fervid fancy cause to hover round you. I am but a most commonplace girl, Ben; the glorious attributes with which you dress me exist only in your imagination. How can I hope to keep you thus demented all your life? And, if you suddenly turn sane, what is to become of me?"

"But, Constance, don't you think I'm the greatest fellow that ever lived? Don't you believe I'll do everything I say: conquer the world that I set out to conquer?"

"Oh, you? Of course. That's an entirely different thing. I am talking of myself."

"Well, do you know why I'm the greatest fellow? It's just because you think me so; that's all. I guess there's nobody really more commonplace than me, if you come right down to facts, but I tell you, Connie, we're not dealing with facts, or, rather, we're dealing with the only real facts there are, which is our belief in each other. I'm all these things simply because you think I am. If the rest of the world said to me, 'Ben McAllister, you don't amount to anything,' I wouldn't believe them—wouldn't begin to believe them. I'm the Ben McAllister you think me, and there isn't any other. Here's my life plainly mapped out for me, and all I've got to do is to follow the diagram. But if you said I didn't amount to anything, then I'd collapse."

"In that case, Ben, you need have no fear of collapsing. I'll always believe in you. But you haven't told me what happened to you in Michigan. Oh, by the way, did you get my letter? I sent it to Ann Arbor; that was the last address you gave me."

"Yes, I got it, just before we had an extraordinary adventure with another pedlar."

"What! Three pedlars!"

"Yes, three of us, but the third was much more than a match for the other two. To tell the truth, Connie, I don't think there's any future for the peddling business in this country, unless a person has an extraordinary amount of cheek, and has a tongue that would make him a bigger fortune as a stump speaker. How are your father and mother? Shows how polite I am not to have asked sooner."

"They are both quite well."

"Nothing on at the college now, of course. Is your father as much set against me as ever?"

The girl sighed.

"We don't talk about you, Ben. One of us may do a great deal of thinking, but there isn't anything said. Mother looks sympathetically at me now and then, but neither of us say a word even when we are alone. Father is very much set in his ways, as a veteran professor in a college has a right to be, and however exaggerated a view one member of the family may take of your attainments, it is counteracted by the silent depreciation of another, and thus the balance of the world is kept equalised."

"Never mind, Connie," cried the young man, confidently, "I'll bring him round yet. He'll be proud to own me for a son-in-law before many years are past. Do they know we write to each other?"

"No. If he were to ask me I should tell him that we did, but he has never asked. I'm afraid he looks on me as a rebellious daughter, and I'm sorry he does. He was very much against my taking this school, and I think he set down my obstinacy in resolving to do something for myself to the trouble we had had about you."

"Say, Connie, that wasn't bad practice. I never looked on it in that light before. If a girl may choose her own profession, why may she not choose her own husband? But do they give you enough here to keep you if you weren't boarding at home?"

"They treat me sumptuously. I get twenty-five dollars a month, and I might board round free if I wanted to. Every day one or other of the children wants me to go home with her. I assure you, Mr. McAllister, it is considered a great honour to walk home with the teacher; so, although you have the temerity to take the schoolhouse by storm, all others are most respectful. I'm company when I go to places, and am shown into the parlour, which has the blinds up for the occasion. To-day I went home to dinner with one little girl—a long-promised visit—and had good things to eat."

"Well, then, Connie, have some mercy on a hungry man. I'll tell you what I want you to do. We will walk to Stormboro, and then you will come with me to the best restaurant in the place, and we'll have a most glorious supper."

"Oh, no, no, I couldn't think of such a thing. It would be all over the town before two hours were passed. No, it would be much better to brave the Douglas in his hall and come to our house. We could have supper there; I can guarantee you that."

"But I don't want to make it uncomfortable for you, Connie."

"I am sure you don't, so that is why our going to any public place in this small town is impossible. Do you say you're hungry?" cried the girl, springing to her feet, the yearning desire of woman to feed her mankind being aroused by his admission of starvation. "It's early yet."

"Early for tea, perhaps, but mighty late for luncheon."

"O you poor boy, do you mean to say that you have had nothing since breakfast time?"

"You see I didn't exactly know where this temple of learning was situated. Your letters were vague on the subject, and I couldn't very well go round town asking, because I'm pretty generally known in the place, and

that would be as bad as dining out together, so I avoided Stormboro, circulating round it in search of the schoolhouse by the wood, and thus I missed my meal, without really remembering I had done so, until I pictured you sitting at a table with me, and then I knew I was hungry."

"O dear, O dear, how inhospitable I have been!" cried Constance. "My poor boy shall be fed, and that right away. You see this wonderful room has all the resources of a restaurant—that is, whenever I go with one of my little girls to be her guest during the noon hour, for on those days my own school luncheon is untouched."

She hurriedly shoved his arms off the desk, and leaning as he was upon them she almost overthrew him in her haste, at which they both laughed. Every incident was subject for mirth between the joyous two. She raised the lid of the desk and took out the deceptive music roll, also a little spirit lamp and a tiny tin kettle. She filled the lamp from a bottle that smelled suspiciously of whisky.

"What have you got there?" asked Ben. "Alcohol? Little girls should not meddle with anything so dangerous. Think how it would read in the papers, 'Another young lady a victim of the alcohol habit.'"

"Oh, there's no danger. Everything has its use, and besides I am giving you a great moral lesson, an angel of light conjured up by the powers of darkness; alcohol assisting in the making of tea! Still, for safety, I always place the lamp on the iron top of the stove, so that if it does blaze up or explode or anything of that sort, there will be no danger of my setting the place on fire and destroying other people's property."

The miniature kettle was soon steaming, and the deft young housekeeper lost little time in brewing the tea.

"One of the girls brings me a jug of cream every morning by special arrangement," continued the housewife, as she set forth the one cup and saucer, "and this I keep in the corner of my desk till it is needed. At first I upset it once or twice, in unthinkingly rummaging for things, but experience has taught carefulness. How will you have it? Sweet?"

"Connie, does the adjective apply to me or to the state of the tea?"

" As you like to take it, Bennie."

" Well, then, the adjective is mine, and the tea is sweet enough because you made it."

" Ah, that's returning my adjective very nicely, Ben. Now for a hungry man I fear this luncheon is rather scanty."

She unrolled from the whitest of linen napkins some dainty slices of bread and butter and a piece of cake.

" But aren't you going to share? "

" Oh, I'll have a sip of tea from the saucer; you shall have the cup."

" Not so, Connie. It isn't according to the customs of the best society in which we move, to its adornment, to drink out of the saucer. You take your sip from the cup, and then I'll never miss the sugar." And thus these two foolish people talked and acted, for they were very young and exceedingly fond of each other, and if any one is inclined to criticise them, let it be remembered that school was closed for the session, and no one really had any right in that room but themselves; the girl because she was technically in charge of the school property of the district, and he, because he was her guest. So it's really no business of ours. We sensible people are not responsible. And thus the china cup passed between them oftener than I am going to set down here, amidst subdued laughter, until suddenly it was arrested in the midair by a knock at the door—a knock that sent the colour flying from the cheeks of the girl, and brought quick fright into her lustrous eyes.

" H—s—h," she whispered under her breath, laying her disengaged hand on his, and thus they both sat in motionless expectancy.

" Have you gone, Miss Fraser? " cried a voice outside. " I have my buggy here and am going into town. Have a ride? "

There was suspense for a moment or two; the outsider turned the knob of the door; then they heard his footsteps departing.

" Well, now, I'd just like to know who *that* is," said Ben, taking the precaution, however, to speak low. " Who

in this neighbourhood thinks he has the right to ask my girl to go out for a buggy ride?"

"Hush," repeated the girl.

"I'm going to see who it is. I'm going to demand an explanation. Do let me have just one peep through the blinds."

"Will you keep quiet? You mustn't move a blind, now that they are down, and we must get away from here as soon as possible. I don't know who it is. It's just the kindness of one of the neighbours, who wanted to give me a lift on the road home, and if we don't start at once we'll very likely meet him returning."

"That's what it is to have a guilty conscience, Con. You see how calm and possessed I am. I don't care how many of the neighbours we meet, so I propose we wait here till it is dark, and then sneak into Stormboro; all on your account, you know. I'm perfectly happy where I am. This is the best place I've struck for a year."

"No, Ben; you wouldn't be happy. There's nothing more to eat."

"Now, Connie, I call that right down mean. You evidently believe in the truth of the old saying that if you want to keep a man good-natured you must feed the brute. But you should not say unkind things to the brute after you've fed him, Miss Constance Fraser. How deferentially that intruder with his braggart buggy said 'Miss Fraser!'"

"Yes, you might take a lesson from him, Ben."

"I'll give him a lesson if I catch him proposing buggy rides to my girl before I have a buggy of my own. He should play fair."

"We must go, we must go. I'll venture out first, and see that the road is clear, and if it is, you are to follow like a stealthy second conspirator."

Constance had cleared away the tea things and was nervously putting on her hat as she said this, while he tried in vain to induce her to stay longer. Her confidence in the seclusion of the place was gone, and she could not conceal her anxiety to get away.

"Come," she cried from the outside; "all's clear.

Come, or I will lock you in, and then you will have to get out of the window, and run the risk of being taken up as a burglar."

When he joined her she continued:

" I can breathe easier now that we are on the high road. I fear I lack courage for the surreptitious, delightful though it may be. I think too much of what the world says."

" That's conventional, Connie."

" I know it is. I told you I was a commonplace person, and hope you may realise the fact before it is too late, poor, deluded Bennie."

" Oh, little Bennie will take care of himself, don't you worry. And now, Connie, I suppose you are going to dismiss me before we get to the town, that you may walk through its streets alone, hypocrite that you are, as if you never knew me."

" Certainly. That is part of the conventionality."

" Ah, well, it can't be helped, and I have the consolation of knowing we have still two miles of a walk before us."

" I must lock the schoolhouse door first," which she did, and then they walked together to the high road, the young woman drawing a deep sigh of relief because the retreat had been achieved unseen.

" How fortune does favour hypocrites, Bennie! "

" Use the singular, if you please, teacher. There's only one hypocritter here. The other is a bold, bad man, who doesn't care if all the world sees him. He isn't ashamed to walk beside his girl, anywhere."

" It's all very well for you to talk big, my dear young man. You are defying the world in general, which is quite a different thing to defying the world in particular. You are a citizen at large, but I am a mere local person, and this town is my particular world. Does your clumsy masculine mind see the difference, or is the distinction too subtle for you? "

" The clumsy masculine mind appreciates the situation, and proposes a remedy. Say, Connie, let us bolt to New York together, and there disdain the great world and ignore the little world. Let's elope, Connie. What's the use of waiting? "

"Agreed," cried the girl, with a merry laugh, "but I haven't drawn my salary yet, so, of course, you have money for two, and I thought peddling had been a failure."

"Money!" shouted the confidence of youth; "there's nothing in the world so easy to make as money. Look at this."

McAllister plunged his hand into his trousers pocket and drew out a roll of wealth that certainly looked imposing, for he had changed the large denominations to small, and a one-dollar greenback is exactly the same size as a thousand-dollar bill. Ben found it as necessary to feed his imagination as to feed his body, and the bulk of the roll gave him a pleasure in handling it.

"Dear me," said Miss Fraser, in astonishment," where did you get all that?"

Ben's imagination waved its optimistic hand metaphorically in the air and boasted, for the future was quite as real to it as the present or the past, and in the future Ben was a millionaire, with waggon-loads of money.

"Oh, that! That's merely the first instalment of what is waiting for me in New York. I'm to be practically the partner of a man rated at five millions. Peddling failed, of course; for, after all, peddling is merely peddling. It is the man who substitutes a profit of a thousand dollars on a deal for a profit of two cents on a trade that gets rich. I'm going to work with large figures when I get to New York."

The girl stopped in her walk and looked at her companion, his face aflush with the discounting of the future.

"Why, Ben, I'm awfully glad to hear that. I thought I was meeting a man who had failed, and not one in the very current of success. Instead, then, of condoling with you, I am to congratulate you."

Ben's honesty, never long dormant, awoke.

"Connie, Connie, Connie, I'm boasting again; counting unhatched chicks, as I'm always doing. No, this pile isn't as valuable as it looks. There's a little over a hundred dollars here. and, so far from being a partner with a very wealthy man, I am not quite sure that I'm even an

employee. His last words to me were to expect nothing. But somehow I do expect; I think it will be all right; but of course, that remains to be seen. What a braggart I am, Connie! Yet I think the reason is the stimulating influence of your presence. It's the exaggeration of the desire to have one's girl think well of one."

"And do you imagine the girl's liking for you rests on a financial basis, Ben?"

"No; but it does rest on a basis of capability, doesn't it, Connie? You wouldn't care to find out that I was a no-account person, now, would you?"

"I'm afraid that makes very little difference, Ben. One's preference does not seem based on reasons or on logic; otherwise so many no-account men, as you call them, would not have doting and faithful wives, poor things."

"Who? The men or the wives?"

"I am sorry for both. What a hopeless thing it must be to have a worthless husband, and yet love him—to find him untrustworthy—to be completely disillusionised—and yet—and—yet—"

"To stick by him, Connie. Would you do that?"

"For better or for worse is the promise a woman makes; for richer or for poorer."

"Well, Connie, that let's us out. We could hardly be poorer, could we?"

"Tell me about this New York man. How did you become acquainted with him? Where did you meet him?"

"I'm saving that story for to-morrow, Connie. It's a to-be-continued-in-our-next yarn, and I'm not going to spoil it now that our walk is coming to an end. No, there are more important things to arrange. Now, I want you to give me to-morrow, all to myself. Let us take an early train and go out to Oriel lake. There's a tavern on its picturesque banks, as perhaps you remember, where we can have a nice luncheon, with fresh fish that are at this moment sporting in the crystal waters, and some potatoes fried in cream. I'll get a boat, and we'll simply dawdle all day in the coves and bays of the lake, except when we are at luncheon. How does that strike you?"

For some moments the girl walked along beside him, her head down, in deep thought. She sighed at last, and said:

"There are difficulties in the way, Ben. I should like to spend the day with you out there, but there may be some picnic afoot, and the whole town may empty itself along the shores of the lake."

"Then we'll turn back and enjoy the empty town."

"Oh, it's easy for you to laugh at me, Ben, but you must remember that I have to live here."

"For a while, yes."

"I have to live here, and I don't want people talking about me."

"Aren't you just a little too sensitive on that point, Constance?"

"Very likely. We women are what we are, Ben, and we can't very well help ourselves. If you were received at my home as you should be, everything would be so different; but since 'tis as 'tis—"

"Why, then, we must make the best of it, and not be cheated out of our rights. Constance, you frighten me with your deep respect for the opinions of others regarding actions that are our own affairs entirely. Are we to be treated forever as if we were children? Has it gone out of the fashion at Stormboro for a young man to walk out with a young woman?"

"I know, I know. I hate to do anything that has even the appearance of being underhanded. I want to go with you, of course, but I feel that the right thing to do, and the honest thing to do, would be to say to-night to my father: 'Mr. McAllister has come from Chicago to see me. He is going on to New York very soon, and we may not meet again for a long time, so I propose to spend the day with him to-morrow at Oriel lake, and he will call here at nine in the morning to take me.' That's what I should do and say, but, frankly, I haven't the courage."

"Why? He couldn't whip you, as if you were one of his own pupils. I like a straightforward course myself. Why not do it?"

"Oh, it's easy to say 'why.' He would make things

very unpleasant for me and for mother, who, he would think, was aiding and abetting me. It is a man's privilege to make himself disagreeable, and, alas, most of them seem to know just how to do it."

" Oh, there are large exceptions, Connie. But look here. Suppose in a year or two I am in a fair way of making all the money we shall need, and that I come to Stormboro to claim my wife. Suppose your father still objects, what are you going to do? Are you going to say to him, ' Oh, well, it doesn't really matter. Ben can get someone else and so can I. We'll call this match off? '"

" Now, Ben, you know that kind of talk is unfair. You see, after all, every man has his own way of being disagreeable."

" Is that disagreeable? Well, Connie, I want to know. Your father is an obstinate man. He doesn't like me, and he never will. What are you going to do when it comes to the final pinch? "

" You said yourself that you were going to make him proud to own you as a son-in-law."

" Oh, certainly, but that will be after we are married. I'm no son-in-law till then; and if your respect for your father's commands holds good, then I must admit that my chances look blue."

" I have every hope that he will relent when he sees that he faces the inevitable. Until the inevitable comes, then, I want to meet his approval as far as I can. 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' you know, Ben, and surely you would be the last one to make me disobey a commandment as unequivocally stated—the only commandment of all the ten so important that it has a promise attached to it."

" That's so, Constance, that's so; but up to a certain point only, for you must not forget other texts that have a bearing on our case. A man is commanded to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and it is a poor text that doesn't work both ways and include the woman as well. Now, I repeat, what are you going to do, Constance, when it comes to a deadlock between your father's will and your own wish? "

"Mr. McAllister, I think one reason my father took such an objection to you was that you were always so expert at capping one text with another; and as he is rather given to texts himself, it was not likely he was going to stand that from a student in his class, even if that student had been theological, which you were not. So I will cap your text with a third, which is 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;' we will cross that bridge when we come to it."

"But I want to know," persisted the young man.

"Now who is obstinate?"

"Not I. I am merely making a request for information. The person who refuses to give it is obstinate, if you like."

"Well, if you will dip into the future, it is much more important to discuss what will happen when your will and mine come into collision. That might happen often, while there could be trouble with my father but once. What will happen then, Bennie?"

"Oh, that's easy. I'll give way at once. Ask me another, or rather answer my question. Why are you afraid to say what you'll do when the crisis comes between your father and me?"

"Stupid young man, with all your supposed alertness. I have answered your question, my dear boy."

"You haven't, Connie. You avoided it with an alertness quite equal to my supposed own."

"When I discussed certain eventualities in our married life, I gave you my reply, although you didn't comprehend. And now, Ben, I think you have come far enough with me. I had better go the rest of the way alone, for we are approaching the town."

"But how about to-morrow, Connie? You're surely not going to have me mope around town all alone, or go off to New York without seeing you again. Won't you risk that lake excursion for my sake?"

"I'm tempted to risk it for my own, Ben. Where are you going to stay to-night?"

"I don't know. At some dollar-a-day place."

"Suppose you go out to the lake to-night and stop

at that little hotel. Then to-morrow, if there is no one there by eleven o'clock, there won't be that day, so you telegraph me and I'll come in time for luncheon."

" All right; but I think we can better that. Come on the first train and we'll risk the crowd. If there is a crowd, we'll saunter off into the country and let them have their lake. It's an artificial body of water anyhow."

With an air of sudden decision, the girl held out her hand, and said. " Very well, Ben, I'll do that. So good-bye until to-morrow."

She turned from him and walked briskly toward the town, never once looking back.

CHAPTER II

"A STRANGER IN THIS CITY HERE"

"So this is New York! Lord, what a stronghold for one poorly equipped man to attack!"

Monro stood at the very front of the ferry-boat, breast up against the extended iron lattice work that shut off bustling humanity from the hurrying tide through which the powerful steamer was forcing its way, piling up heaps of creamy foam with its blunt front, to fall away in fleecy lines on either hand and disappear under the pattering blades of the paddle wheels. The steamer had come out from between environments of tall piles, clamped together in two embracing walls, opening and yawning toward New York; walls that seemed to have a strange flexibility, swaying loosely in the water when shouldered by the broad gunwales. These two high walls of knitted timber presented outstretched arms to the incoming boat, giving way to her impetuosity as she rushed into the embrace, then gradually tightening on her until at last the craft was clasped close and firm. The ferry-boat, with a continued low, menacing moan that was a warning to anything floating outside, moved slowly out of the wooden crevasse, and, once clear of the timber canyon, the amazing sight of long-stretched New York burst suddenly upon him, fronted by the panorama of the broad and noble river. A salt breeze new to his inland senses came up from the bay, and for the first time in his life he saw the floating majesty of an ocean liner. The animation of the wide river enthralled him: the shuttle-like ferries weaving the threads of human intercourse between shore and shore; the island clusters of brown barges and massed canal-boats, with canvas windmills whirling, the domestic effect afloat of the week's wash hung on lines

fluttering like rows of white flags in the breeze; the railway ferries, each with a train aboard, and an unseen tug on the other side, its invisibility adding mystery to the motion of the shapeless hulk. But most attractive of all to him was the swan-like gracefulness of a passenger steamer, dazzling as a snow-drift on the waters; a bride of the billows, a sylph of the stream; the rapid paddle wheels fluttering like the drumming of a partridge wing, very music of motion, with the slow, dignified, rhythmical up-rising and down-falling of the walking beam, beating time athwart the sky line, an orchestral symphony afloat; the most beautiful creation that man has trusted to the bosom of the tide, its airy, cloud-vision of whiteness blending well with the blue of sky and water, possessing all the swiftness of the skimming swallow, and all the dignity of a gracious lady; a fair goddess of the gentle, lapping wave.

Then, as if they were gulls blown in from sea, the sailing ships came racing up the tideway before the salt wind, the tall masts swaying as shore-new sailors sway who have not yet lost their sea legs, the rising and dipping prows retaining still in their heave a suggestion of the motion of the ocean, the whiffs from the black hulls carrying an aroma of something tarry and foreign.

But the background of this stirring picture, the far-extending, hard, clear-cut outline of the city, persistently impressed itself upon the young man's consciousness, and chilled the pleasure he felt in the contemplation of the marine spectacle playing out its unending drama before the fixed back curtain. The city seemed rigid, cruel, unrelenting. The smoke of sacrifice hovered above it; every palpitating steamer, every rushing express brought new victims to its reeking altars. This great, elongated, civic cannibal lay motionless and surfeited with the humanity it had consumed and was consuming; yet never replete; always unsatisfied.

There is nothing more heroic in the annals of mankind than the adventuring of a youth against the fortress of a mighty city, himself practically unarmed. He enlists as a private in a campaign whose death-roll is so heavy that

no record can be kept of it, thus differing from every other battle that calls for courage and endurance. He is not sure even of his rations; he may ask for bread, and get only the stone pavement under his weary feet. Yet day by day he enters unflinchingly into the strife, not knowing whether he will scale the battlements or fall unremembered into the trenches. He belongs to a regiment which has no *esprit de corps* and no commander, where every man fights for his own hand, and where there is no ambulance brigade. For its own safety the city will bury him when he is dead, but that is all he can rely upon.

The ferry-boat slowed into the outstretched arms of the slip, elbowing its way in, heaved gently to right or to left as it rubbed shoulders against the yielding piles on this side or on that. There was the clanking lowering of the drawbridge to this grim fortress, the uplifting of the iron gates, and then the sudden surge of the crowd landward, as if a moment lost were gone forever, as indeed it is; and nowhere is this fact so energetically realised as on the incoming of a New York ferry steamer. From afar off Jim had heard the low murmur that was the city's voice; now he was in the midst of the deafening roar of it. The grinding wheels of the trucks on the cobblestones seemed a modern type of the Indian Juggernaut rollers; but here people dodged them, and did not fall with fatalistic apathy underneath them, so perhaps that difference was also typical and encouraging.

The excitement and noise and bustle and hurry had rather a depressing than a stimulating influence on Monro's nerves. He seemed so hopelessly out of it all. Everybody else was rushing toward some definite task; at least they all acted as if they were, and he was an outsider. It did not appear possible that anyone wanted anything from him for which the purchaser was willing to pay good money. Never before had he felt himself absolutely of no account in the world—a helpless, floating atom of no particular use, and with no niche needing him. His belief in the existence of Glassthrop & Co. faded; somehow it had become incredible that any particular firm, managed by any particularly real people, could have its home

in this pandemonium on whose threshold he stood thus hesitating which way to turn. It could not be possible that any one atom in this hive knew any other atom; knew its name, knew where it lived. And how far beyond the limits of credence was the thought of a man meeting anyone he had known in some other sphere of existence. Just as he had reached this stage of cogitation the impossible happened, ushered in by a heavy hand falling on his unsuspecting shoulder, while a strident, confident voice cried:

"Well, I'm damned if it ain't Jim Monro, standing sound asleep in the middle of the sidewalk. I say, Jim, old fellow, it's a sight for sore eyes to see you. When did you drift along this way? Just in?"

"Just in," repeated Jim, taking the extended hand of Pat Maguire. All his deep distrust and dislike of Pat was gone, and he placed his disengaged hand on Maguire's shoulder with a cordiality equal to that with which he had been so boisterously greeted. Little did he dream during their last encounter that he would so soon welcome this man as his dearest friend. "And where did you spring from? I thought you intended to drive across Ohio, Pennsylvania and Jersey to New York. You have surely never done it in this time."

The other shouted loud with laughter, as if Jim had said something more than ordinarily funny, but this was only an expression of comradeship and good feeling. He was evidently as glad to see Jim as Jim was to welcome him.

"Drive, is it? Lord love you, driving acrost three States or four is too slow work for Pat Maguire when there's trains running. No, my boy, I sold that Rosenante of yours for ten dollars more than I gave for it, and that ten dollars took me most of the way to this ferry that I just got off of. You see New York's a big place, and if a fellow's going to tackle it at all, he mustn't lose any time. That's the way I looked at it."

"Did you come over on this boat? I didn't see you."

"There's lots of things you don't see, Jim, me boy; but then by the same token I didn't see you, so we're square

on that head. I was on the upper deck all by myself. I sees a ladder and up I climbs it. 'Get down out of that,' says a fellow by the wheel house. 'You've no business here,' says he. 'I want to see the city of New York,' says I, wid a brogue about double as thick as his own. 'Ye can see New York well enough down where the rist are,' says he. 'Thrue fur ye,' says I; 'but an Irishman's place is above the crowd.' Wid that he laughed. 'You're too fresh, me boy,' he says, 'and you'll soon get your head broke if ye keep on the way you've started.' 'If it comes to breaking heads,' says I, 'I'm from the very country where they 'tend to that same job eligantly, and the man that breaks the head of Pat Maguire has got to lift his stick smarter and hit quicker than any fellow I've ever met to this day,' says I. 'Come in to the pilot-house,' says he, 'and make yourself at home,' and as it was too pleasant an invitation to be discourteously rejected I went in. So I crossed the river with the wheelman, which is entirely agin the rules ov the company. I asked him down to have a drink with me, but he couldn't leave the spokes he was twirling, an' we're to meet at a saloon he gave me the address of when he comes off duty."

"Well, Pat, you'll never want friends. You make a New York friend even before you enter the city."

"And meet an old friend the moment I put my foot on the shore. So let us moisten our acquaintance and have a drink over our runnin' agin each other, and good luck to both of us."

"I'm not much on the drink, but I'll go you a lemonade or glass of pop."

"Pop goes the weasel," cried Pat, with great contempt. "You can't take New York by storm on lemonade. No, we'll have beer or nothing. Come along."

They went together across the front street and into a saloon that stood at the corner. The street was a most disreputable-looking thoroughfare, a howling wilderness of traffic and truck loads of freight, but the interior of the saloon was not as repulsive as Jim expected to find it in such a locality. There was a sprinkling of sawdust

on the floor. The counter that ran across the room was of polished mahogany, elaborately decorated with mouldings, and behind this bar was a broad mirror of bevelled plate glass, whose surface was ornamented with artistic free-hand scroll work done in French chalk. Before the mirror was a glistening array of many-coloured glasses symmetrically stacked, flanked with bottles and prismatic decanters. At one end of the bar stood a basinlike receptacle of german silver, with two compartments, one of which was filled with broken crackers and the other with little squares of cheese. To this refection Maguire at once helped himself. A handsome man, whose chin and cheeks were clean shaven, but who wore on his lip a heavy moustache, stood behind the bar in his shirt sleeves, for the day was hot, and his shirt sleeves were of spotless whiteness.

"And how are you the day. Mike Doolan?" cried Maguire, with effusive friendliness.

"I can't complain," said Mike, looking hard at him, but speaking with the hail-fellow-well-met geniality of his profession. He greeted so many during the day who knew him, but whom he could not himself recognise, that the cordial salutation of a seeming stranger was no oddity. "Mike, this is my friend, Jim Monro, who's just this moment come to New York."

"Happy to meet you, Mr. Monro," said the bartender, reaching his hand across the counter and grasping that of the stranger. Jim was so dumfounded at his comrade's impudence, and so much amazed at his glibness in calling the bartender by name, wondering how he discovered it, that he could only mumble inarticulate recognition of the bar-man's courtesy. The latter had an accent that indicated his nationality, but no brogue, while Pat's brogue was now as pronounced as if he had landed that morning on a liner from Queenstown, rather than from a ferryboat sailing out of Jersey.

"I see fairly that you don't recollect me at all," said Pat.

"I recollect your face well enough, but I don't just call to mind your name. However, I'll think of it the minute you're gone. I always do."

"Oh, that's like enough. I'm Pat Maguire."

"Of course you are. From the 17th ward; or is it the 19th?"

"From both I've been this long time. You know Malloy, surely."

"The pilot on the ferry? I know him well."

"I'm an old friend of his, and he's to meet me here as soon as his trick at the wheel is over for the day."

"Any friend of Malloy's welcome at this bar."

"I hope, by and by, to be welcome on my own account."

"Ye'll be that," said the barkeeper, with a nod of admiration.

"We'll have a beer apiece, and what will ye drink yerself, Mike?"

"I'm not drinking these days," returned the bartender, "but I wouldn't mind a smoke."

"Then you're foolish if you don't choose the best smoke you have in your pile of boxes. A man can't be too careful when he's picking for himself."

Maguire, with the air of the president of the First National Bank, threw on the counter a ten-dollar bill, which the barkeeper, automatically running between finger and thumb to test its texture, flung into the till and counted out the change. He clipped off the pointed end of the cigar at a machine which stood on the counter, then struck a match. Maguire lifted the foaming glass to his lips, and said, "Here's luck to us all." Jim had tasted beer before, and this lager was cool and refreshing.

"Well, Jim, where are you going to strike for first?" asked Pat, setting his glass on the counter.

"I don't quite know. I was thinking of taking a walk up and down Broadway, if I can find it," replied Jim.

"It's easily found," put in the barkeeper. "Ye can't cross the island without crossing Broadway."

"Oh, that's all right," cried Patrick, nonchalantly; "the boy has something on that he don't want me to know about. He always was a close fellow, was Jim, and never took much of a shine to me, but there's no man on earth

I would rather do a good turn to than Mr. Monro. Now, Jim, I'll give you a pointer. I learned something comin; over the river. I found out that the smallest bit of a tug has the loudest whistle. If you hear a tremendous roar, and look about ye, thinking to see the biggest and latest liner from Liverpool, ye find that all the noise comes from a tot of a tug no larger than yer fist, and bunching up the white water ahead of her like a snow avalanche, making a divvil of a fuss, and going just about a third as fast as some of the tremendous ocean steamers that's saying nothing at all, at all. Just remember that in New York."

"I don't see the application of your observation, Maguire. Are you advising me to be the tug or the liner?"

"Well, the application is general. If ye can't be the liner, let folks know yer in the business by lifting up yer bazoo. Nobody would take any notice of the tug if it wasn't fur the hulla-balloo of her whistle."

"Will you have another drink?" asked Monro, changing the subject and abandoning the simile.

"I'm one of these men that never refuses anything."

"What will you have, Mr. Doolan?"

"I'll just wet my mouth after this cigar."

And so they had beer all round, and then Jim took leave of the two. Pat went with him to the sidewalk, and there shook his hand.

"I'll just go back and have a little further talk with Mike Doolan, who seems a decent sort of chap, and maybe he can give me a hint or two that will be worth having. Ye noticed I got his name on my tongue's end from Malloy on the ferry-boat. It's all very well, Jim, to be high and mighty, and depend on one's self, but there's much to be picked up in an amicable conversation, if yer not above instruction."

"I hope you don't think I am high and mighty. I give you my word I was anything but depending strongly on myself when you met me, and I'm sure you saw I was very glad to fall in with you."

"No, I was referring to myself entirely, and I was just as glad to see you. Now I have no address; I'm just Maguire of Nowhere-at-all, but if you drop into this

saloon when you get settled you'll likely hear of me, and I'll do the same by you. Who can tell but maybe we can help each other; and if I can there'll be nobody gladder than me, as I've said once or twice before. It's a big city, and we're two pretty small men, Jim—at the present time of speaking."

"Thank you. I'll drop in."

"And where's the other fellow? Have you shook him? It never seemed to me he amounted to much."

"He's coming through to New York in a day or two. I think, perhaps, you underrate him. You don't know him as well as I do."

"True for ye, true for ye, and one shouldn't be too spry in sizing anybody up. Oh, well, when he comes ye'll have company at least, and that's always something."

So they shook hands again and parted, Pat returning to the saloon and Jim striding east along the side street to find Broadway. Whether it was the effect of the meeting or the beer, he might have been puzzled to decide, but he went up the street a man more confident in himself and his destiny than when he landed.

There was no mistaking Broadway, once he came to it. Again the feeling of non-importance came over him, but he thought with a smile that Maguire would probably regard the busy street with a patronising air, looking on it merely as an avenue leading to his own ultimate success. Monro wandered aimlessly, jostled by the crowd, his ears filled with the interminable roar, recalling the story of the countryman who stood for hours at a corner of this thoroughfare, waiting for the procession to end, wondering what circus it belonged to, and commenting on the infrequency of the brass bands.

At last he began to take notice of the numbers over the doors, and then referred to the card Mitchell had given him. It was long before he came to the address on the card, and the building, when he found it, was on the opposite side of the street. He stood at the edge of the curb and looked across at it, cogitating on what it might contain for him. It was a large, tall structure, and, to judge by the signs, it housed the offices of many companies.

On the windows of the second floor he saw, in white letters, the name "Glassthrop & Co." For one brief moment he thought of crossing and settling the matter offhand, but he reflected that if Mitchell wrote a letter, it could not have come to New York quicker than he did himself, and that it was perhaps better to postpone a visit to Glassthrop until next morning, so with that he again took up his slow parade until hunger made itself felt. He searched the side streets on the outlook for cheapness, and finally, after a study of a card of prices at the door, ventured in and was fed. One hour in the afternoon found him at Central Park, and a later hour saw him gazing at the incoming shipping near Castle Garden; then it was time to look out a place to sleep.

At 9.30 next morning he presented himself at the office of Glassthrop & Co. He entered an extensive room occupied by numerous busy clerks. With a sinking heart he gave his name to the man who inquired for it, and was much cheered by the reply.

"Oh, yes; Mr. Glassthrop was expecting you this morning. You are to wait for him. He will not be here till ten."

With that the clerk opened a door which led to a room facing Broadway and asked him to take a seat, which he did, and was left the sole occupant. The room was large and had two windows, each composed of two sheets of plate glass, on which he saw reversed the name of the firm. There were three closed roller-top desks in light oak, all alike, and at the back of the room was a huge black shiny safe, with the name of its makers in gayly coloured letters, and underneath, in similar chromatic painting, the words "Glassthrop & Company." Somehow this seemed to lend importance to the firm, as if the safe had been especially made for its present position, as perhaps it was. The round nickel-plated knob glared at him like the one white eye in the dark face of a fabled giant.

But what most attracted his attention was the fact that from floor to ceiling, beside the safe and beside each of the three desks, hung a taut thick rope, fastened to a ring in the floor and a ring in the ceiling in each instance.

Around the room, braced out a foot or more from the cornice, was a shining brass rod, like a rod from which pictures are suspended, but here too far from the wall and too thick to be used for such a purpose. Indeed, its use was plain enough, for over the first desk there rested on the rod a small two-wheeled trolley, from which depended a rope, at whose loose end hung a padded leathern loop, as if the occupant of the room were in the habit of practising gymnastics over the three desks.

Monro had hardly ceased to wonder at this extraordinary equipment in a business office when he heard a slight rattle in the Yale lock of the outer door, which he noticed as he passed it had the word "private" painted on its large pane of opaque ground glass, and the door was flung open. There entered a stout man in a round hat, carrying in his arms another man, who had on his head a tall, exquisitely glossy silk hat, which somehow gave an incongruous appearance to the pair. The body of the man in the other's arms was stalwart, and the head was of Napoleonic massiveness, but half of the man was missing; he had no legs. The attendant placed his burden on an office chair, then quickly unlocked and rolled back the lids of the three office desks, displaying the usual array of document-filled pigeonholes. He then took his master's shining hat and hung it on a peg, afterward easily lifting its owner and placing him on the polished table of the first desk. Then he stood back, as if awaiting further orders. The cripple spoke with sharp decision in his voice.

"Legs, I shall not want the brougham again this forenoon. Have it at the door promptly at one o'clock."

"Very good, sir," answered the man addressed as "Legs," touching the rim of his hat with his finger and withdrawing silently.

"You are Mr. Monro, I take it?"

"Yes, sir."

"My name's Glassthrop. Mitchell wrote me about you. When did you come in?"

"Yesterday."

"Western man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Educated?"

"In a way. I'm a graduate of a college in Illinois."

"H'm. What did they teach you? Anything practical?"

"The usual course. I can read and write and cipher."

"Know anything of mathematics?"

"A little."

"Trigonometry and that sort of thing?"

"I don't know that I would shine in an examination on higher trigonometry."

"Mitchell told me very little about you, so I have to find out for myself. Just bring here that instrument in the corner behind you. Do you know what it is?"

Monro, getting up, took from the corner a brass mechanism, which had three stout legs, with metal points at the ends of them. "I don't know exactly, but it looks to me like a surveying instrument. A sextant, perhaps."

"It is a surveying instrument, but I should call it a theodolite. You know nothing about it, then?"

"No, sir."

"Put it back."

Monro returned the theodolite to its corner. Glassthrop raised his right arm, grasped the leathern loop hanging from the trolley, drew up his body apparently without an effort, sailed airily over his own desk and the next, coming down on the third as lightly as a feather. He took from a pigeonhole a black leather-covered thin book, and returned to his own desk in the same way, as if wafted back and forth by magic.

"There," he said, handing Monro the flexible volume, "that's Trautwine's 'Surveying.' Study it whenever you have leisure. It will give you some hints about the use of that instrument in the corner."

Monro slipped the thin treatise into his pocket.

"I understood from Mitchell's letter that there were two of you?"

"Yes, sir. McAllister, my comrade, is detained in the West, but will be here in a few days."

"What did Mitchell lead you to expect?"

"Nothing."

"Made no mention of salary?"

"No, sir."

"Quite right. Now I propose to give you a trial, though without binding myself to anything, and for a beginning I offer you five dollars a day. Is that satisfactory?"

"More than satisfactory, sir."

"But, mind, you pay your own expenses. That is, except traveling. If I order you to go from here to Denver, of course I pay the railroad fares, but that's all. I won't have any bills coming in on me for extras or six-dollar-a-day hotels. You may go to a six-dollar-a-day hotel if you want to, but you must pay the bill yourself. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. The theodolite matter is hardly ripe yet, so you will have all the more time for studying the peculiarities of the machine."

"May I suggest, sir, that if anything is to depend on the surveying I am to do, it would be better to get an expert, for I doubt if I can acquire skill enough even by constant study of this book to—"

"Ever heard the story of Stephen Gerrard and his hired man?"

"I don't know that I have."

"Well, the man came to him for a job, and Gerrard set him at throwing a pile of stones over a wall. When that was done the man came back and asked what else there was to do about the place. 'Throw the stones back again,' said Gerrard. And thus it went on all day, part of the time the stones going one way, and part of the time the other. The man made no comment; if it seemed to him a foolish business he never let on. Gerrard hired him, and I believe he ultimately became manager of the Gerrard business."

"You mean that I am to make no suggestions?"

"Make 'em if you like, but I love a man who asks no questions, who does exactly what he is ordered to do."

"All right, Mr. Glassthrop."

Once more Glassthrop reached up to the leather loop, and this time went sailing half round the room, grasped the rope near the safe, and slid down with agile exactness to the floor. The well-oiled trolley ran without a squeak, and the heavy body of the man came gently to the carpet without a thud. To Jim's bewildered imagination this method of moving about began to seem the natural order of things, for there was not the slightest trace in Glassthrop's manner of any knowledge that his action was out of the usual, and to him, of course, it was not. If any one had been so rude as to call Glassthrop's attention to the fact that he was legless he would possibly have been surprised for a moment, and, while admitting the truth of the allegation, would perhaps wonder why the other had noticed a deprivation that was never present in his own mind.

Seated before the safe, he whirled the polished knob this way and that; then, with a strength that seemed prodigious, swung back the massive metal door. He took out a japanned iron box, closed and locked the safe, climbed up the rope hand over hand to the dangling loop, with the metal box under one arm.

"Let me assist you," cried Jim, springing to his feet and offering to take the box. But as he spoke Glassthrop skimmed with the swiftness of a swallow round the eaves of the room and had settled on his desk like a bird on a twig.

"I don't need any help, thank you," he said, and the other sat down, convinced of the verity of the remark.

Glassthrop took a key from one of the little drawers before him, and, opening the japanned box, lifted from it a few bunches of paper currency, each held together with an elastic band. These he handed to young Monro.

"This has already been counted, but I always like to be doubly sure. Just take a seat at the further desk; you will find paper, pen and ink there; go over these packages, note down the denominations and the amount of each package and add up the total."

Jim followed the directions. He was vaguely conscious that Glassthrop had rung an electric bell, and in answer

to his summons a clerk came in with a mass of letters, opened and unopened. These were rapidly dealt with, replies were taken down in shorthand and before Jim had finished his own task the clerk had disappeared.

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"There are exactly ten thousand dollars here."

"That's all right. Now go into the other room, bring a large stout envelope that will hold the amount, some matches, sealing wax and a candle. Give me the packages."

When Monro was absent, Glassthrop deftly substituted the bunches he held for a similar lot, which also apparently consisted of good money in various denominations. The lid of the box was closed down on the aggregation that Monro had so carefully counted, and when the young man returned with the envelope and the sealing wax he found his new master sitting just as he had left him.

"Put these bills carefully into that envelope."

When this was done Glassthrop himself moistened the flap and fastened it down; then, with a pen, wrote the name of the firm rapidly across the back of the envelope, the ink spreading when it came to the wet overlay. Rubbing the blotting paper over the signature, he handed the envelope to the waiting Monro.

"You'll find a hank of red tape in the other desk. Just tie this up neatly and bring it to me."

As the tying went on Glassthrop struck a match and lit the candle. Then he took the package, held the blazing wax over it at the junction of the tapes, until a large blob of red wax covered the crossing, and finally pressed on its semi-fluid surface a seal which hung at his watch chain. Treating the other side of the package in the same way, and examining the result minutely, finding it secured to his satisfaction, he said to Monro:

"In the left-hand bottom drawer of the middle desk you will find a pocketbook which will, I think, hold this envelope and its contents. Just bring it to me, will you?"

Into this pocketbook he squeezed the packet.

"Better tie the whole thing with tape, then there will be no chance of it dropping out. Now, listen atten-

tively to me," he said, when the operation was finished. "You will put this packet into your inside pocket, and you will guard it faithfully, until the man it is intended for calls for it. You will buy a ticket for the night train to Montreal, and I need not advise you to take no one into your confidence with regard to the freight you carry. Secure a sleeping berth; that will, perhaps, be safest, for you might drop off into a dose in an ordinary car on a long night's run, but do not undress. Lie down in your clothes, and I advise you to be certain that this packet is underneath you, in which case a thief is not likely to get it away without waking you. But the main point is to keep your mission secret. When you arrive at Montreal, go to any hotel you like. They will charge you three dollars and a half a day at the Windsor, so perhaps you will choose a cheaper place, but I shouldn't advise you to stay at too cheap a tavern. When you are located, telegraph me your address. You may have to stay there a day, or a week, or a month; I can't tell at present just how long, but you will have the consolation of knowing that your pay is going on. Some time before the month is out a man will call on you and ask for this packet. You will demand an order, and he will hand to you one-half of this document."

Mr. Glassthrop held up a letter written on the office paper of the firm, which he tore carefully into two pieces, the division zigzagging across the sheet.

"If the piece presented to you exactly matches the section in your possession, you will give him the packet and take his receipt for it. There your duty ends, and you may return at once to New York. But I expect that you will not allow yourself to be buncoed out of so valuable a parcel. You have an inside pocket, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then here you are. Now button up your coat. Ah, it makes rather a perceptible lump on the outside; still that can't be helped. Here is your half of the order. You had better keep that in the purse in your trousers pocket."

Monro followed directions without a word, and stood ready for further instructions, if there were any.

"Here is a pay slip, which they will cash for you at the outer office," continued Glassthrop, after a pause. "This gives you one hundred and fifty dollars, or thirty days' pay. Will that be enough, do you think?"

"Ample, if I have not to stay longer than a month."

Glassthrop looked keenly at him. His eyes had a keen, penetrating quality, and it occurred to Monro that this would be a very difficult man from whom to conceal a guilty secret. Jim had entirely forgotten that Glassthrop had no legs; he found himself dominated by that searching gaze.

"Anything you don't understand about your commission?"

"No, sir. If I should be in doubt after I reach Montreal, I shall telegraph you and await your answer before I act."

"Do so. You may send in a bill for your railway fare and for the sleeping car. Good-morning."

Jim let himself out of the self-locking door, a quick gesture from Glassthrop directing him, and left the place to the accompaniment of the peremptory ringing of the electric bell summoning a clerk. As he entered the outer office to cash his pay-check he noticed a long row of men sitting on a bench by the wall, each evidently waiting his turn to see Glassthrop, and he smiled to think that on his second day in New York he had kept important people in the ante-chamber.

Once out on the pavement he no longer dawdled as he had done before, but walked as rapidly and definitely as any he met, and no one passed him. He remembered that the railway ticket offices were further down Broadway, and thither he set his face, imagining he had ten thousand dollars in his inner pocket.

CHAPTER III

"MARK HIS FIRST APPROACH BEFORE MY LADY"

MONRO experienced no difficulty in purchasing a railway ticket to Montreal, but he found that sleeping berths were rather at a premium. The hot weather was driving people north, the agent said, and they were sending heavy trains every night through the Adirondacks and beyond to the land of coolness. Mountain, lake and forest were beckoning to the parched dweller in New York, and the call was being answered so universally that Jim had to content himself with an upper berth, which is to most people an unattractive resting place for a stuffy night, but to the young man it promised to be a haven of rest, for he had not slept in the ordinary car coming from Chicago, and his first night in New York, what with the excitement of the day and the unusual warmth of the night, had been little better, so far as slumber was concerned, than the dreary hours spent on the train.

Yet, tired and sleepy as he was, Monro determined, for the safety of his treasure, to add one more wide-awake night to those which had gone before. He knew there was little chance that any one could surmise he carried such a sum of money, but he was resolved to incur no risks. He imagined that Glassthrop had chosen him for the task largely because no one would suspect him of concealing wealth in a coat which was none too new or fashionable. Once aboard the train and sure of his car, he went into the smoking-room, seating himself in a luxurious armchair by the open window. He was early, and consequently had a choice of places. Soon the room filled, and, when the train started, several were standing leaning against the walls of panelled mahogany. A smoking-room on a sleeping car is an interesting spot.

There is little stiffness in its social atmosphere, however thick the air may be with the fumes of tobacco. Habitues of the smoking compartment are usually men who have travelled much and made the most of life as they found it. Acquaintances are as speedily formed as they are afterward abruptly terminated without a thought, and striking experiences are related, one story calling forth another. Jim was a good listener, even if little in evidence when the talk was most prolific, and what he heard interested him. Now and then the negro porter came in and announced to some man that his berth was made up, and the individual selected rose, yawned, bade the company good-night and disappeared. At last Monro found himself alone, as he had been at the beginning. The porter now put in a final appearance and made some bustle about cleaning up the room. This was the negro's sleeping place, although Monro did not know that, and the coloured person evidently thought it was extravagance for a man to pay for a berth and not occupy it.

"Yours is upper five, I think, sah," ventured the porter at last.

"Yes."

"It's all ready, sah. I'll call you in the morning in plenty of time, sah."

"Thanks." So, accepting this broad hint, Monro took off his shoes, climbed the step-ladder the porter held in place for him, and crawled, dressed as he was, into his restricted quarters.

Such is the perversity of all things pertaining to humanity that on the nights when he had resolved to sleep at all costs he couldn't, and now, when he wished to keep awake, drowsiness persisted in overcoming him. The rumble of the train was most somnolent. He lay face downward, the better to protect his charge, and he heard the wheels rhyming the refrain which was such a favourite with Maguire:

> I have fifteen dollars in my inside pocket,
> Do ye moind.

He smiled at this, but because of it, and in spite of the

sweltering night, he found himself dropping off in slumber, the refrain taking all sorts of fantastic versions that by and by seemed to be most rational variations. Albany disturbed him; it was unnecessarily noisy and excited for that time of night. The train would never get to Montreal if it stopped so long at Albany, he thought. He heard the rushing of trucks along the platforms, the heavy thud of trunks, the agitated inquiries of anxious people. Why weren't they in bed? What was the sense in racing up and down like this? Somebody wanted a berth, and the porter said there wasn't a vacant upper or lower berth on the train; then the somebody cursed the inertia of the railway company in not adding another car, and an authoritative voice proclaimed that the locomotive had more than it ought to pull already. He did not remember quitting Albany, for the next thing he knew was that the wheels were at their old chorus; then it appeared that after getting a thousand miles or more north of Albany the conductor remembered he had forgotten something, and so the train was taken all the way back to find it. Monro, on the whole, was favourable to the railway company, but this really seemed too much. It wasn't the proper way to conduct a great trunk line. They were stopping at Albany again, but everybody had gone to bed, probably not expecting the train to return, and the place was very quiet. He expostulated with the porter, who said the conductor couldn't find what he wanted on account of everybody being asleep. Then the porter proposed that he should change his berth, but Monro insisted that he had paid for upper five, and upper five he was going to have. The porter insulted him by asking him if he were awake; whereas he had never been to sleep, as he informed the foolish negro, who could not be expected to know any better because of his colour. But the porter was so persistent in saying that his berth was upper seven instead of upper five, that to get rid of him he said, " All right, all right. Yes, I'm much wider awake than you are, and I am already dressed." That seemed to satisfy the porter, who forthwith ceased to trouble, and oblivion followed.

When he actually awoke, his first motion was a pat of the hand against his coat. Yes, the packet was in its place, secure enough. He realised now that he had slept soundly all night, and he already appreciated the refreshing, exhilarating effects of his repose. The train was standing still and the silence struck him as unusual. Could it be really morning? he asked himself. He parted the curtains and looked down the long, gloomy alley, walled on each side by sombre drapery. The lamps at the roof were unlit, and grey daylight filtered in at the end windows. He slipped down from his upper berth, feeling with his stockinged toes for the edge of the lower, anxious not to disturb the sleeper beneath him. He found his shoes under the lower bunk and put them on. Walking down the narrow curtained canyon, he was amazed when he looked out the forward window to see that his sleeping-coach stood alone on a side-track that joined the main line a little further to the north. He walked quickly to the rear of the car, and there the serrated cliff of a gravel-pit presented itself. Trying the door he found it locked, and further investigation convinced him that he was alone in the sleeper; every berth, upper and lower, was tenantless. The other door also was locked. Still it would be no great matter to raise one of the double windows and drop to the ground. But what then? The verbal contest with the porter had not been a dream after all; at least part of it was true, and the porter had left him in the belief that he was already dressed and wide awake. There had been some crisis that entailed a change of cars, as unexpected as it was unprepared for.

The disabled sleeper had evidently been run along a siding that led into a gravel-pit. He saw the main line, and beyond that there seemed to be a lake, but over it floated a filmy gauze of morning mist. From what he could see, the car had been abandoned in a mountainous, or at least a hilly region. The solemnity and completeness of the silence impressed him, and when he had, with some difficulty, raised a window, the air struck in cool and delicious. After all, if there were anything to eat in

the neighbourhood, this was not a bad exchange for that gigantic oven, New York. The slight refreshing breeze brought into sharp contrast the stuffiness of the car, and he breathed the incoming current with delight.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by the incisive, continued ring of an electric bell just above his head. He jumped as if some one had fired a shotgun at his ear. Swinging round, amazed and startled, he gazed for a moment stupefied at the electrical indicator which was fastened to the wall of the car, near the ceiling, with the still quivering clapper of the bell above it. The indicator was numbered according to the total of upper and lower berths in the car, and there were also a few special disks: "Smoking-Room," "Drawing-Room," and so forth. Monro had looked into every berth as well as into the smoking-room, and had satisfied himself that he was entirely alone in a locked car. Now he knew there must be another forlorn passenger besides himself. The disk had dropped under the words "Drawing-Room," so recovering his composure, he walked to the other end of the car and pushed the drawing-room door partly open. The vision which met his eyes disturbed him even more than the sudden ringing of the electric bell had done, and he closed the drawing-room door quickly and noiselessly. He had a brief glimpse of a young girl sitting up in the one berth that occupied a side of the small compartment. She was gazing dreamily, still half asleep, out of the window at the mist-covered lake, one small hand holding back the brown window curtain. There was a general effect of fleecy whiteness about the sitting figure, a cloud of lace at the neck and wrists, a protusion of reddish curls about the shoulders, a confused impressionist sketch rather than a completed picture in Jim's mind, for he closed the door softly and speedily, standing outside, hoping she had not seen him, a fervent wish that was realised, for the girl was looking toward the lake. A voice came to him, clear and musical as a silver bell.

"O porter, would you kindly go to the next car forward and tell my maid, who is in lower twelve, that I would like her to come to me as soon as she can?"

Jim cleared his throat once or twice.

"Madam, I am sorry to say there is no porter and no forward car. There seems to have been an accident of some sort, and this sleeper has been side-tracked and abandoned by the rest of the train in a gravel-pit."

"O dear!" The voice had now become one of alarm. "And who—and who—"

"Who am I? I am the other passenger who is left behind."

There was a pause, during which the occupant of the drawing-room evidently arose from her berth, for Jim heard the bolt of the door thrust to with a certain stealth, but the silence of the car made the action audible, and Jim smiled at the precaution. After an interval of silence he cleared the huskiness from his throat once more, and said: "I propose to get out of the window and discover, if I can, where we are. I will come back in a short time and report progress to you, if I may."

"Thank you," the pleasant voice from the inner room replied. "But why do you go by way of the window?"

"The outer doors are locked."

"Isn't there an axe fastened to the wall near the door?"

"An axe?" he answered in amazement. "I don't know. Oh, yes, I see one in the passage."

"Very well, then, break the lock off the door. I'm certainly not going to climb out of the window; and if you will kindly knock off the lock it will save me the trouble of doing so."

Monro laughed outright, and he thought he heard a silvery echo of his mirth from within the state-room.

"Aren't you afraid of a suit for damages? This is an expensive car."

"The suit should go the other way. The company gets off very easily if a broken lock is all it costs them for abandoning two passengers in the way they seem to have done. I never heard of such a thing." The voice was now rising in indignation. "It is simply gross carelessness. I had no warning. Had you?"

"I'm afraid I had, and was too sleepy to attend to it,

I remember a verbal tussle with the porter, but thought at the time, and even since, that it was a dream."

"Well, he didn't warn me. Are you going to break that lock?"

"Of course. I am at this moment getting the hang of the axe."

The removing of the silver-plated lock was not so easy as it seemed, for sleeping-cars are solidly constructed, but the edge of the axe was at length forced in between metal and timber, and, with a rending, the trick was done. Monro opened the door and stood for a few moments on the platform, wondering whether he should speak to the lady or make a reconnoissance of the neighbourhood without further parley. He hought he should speak, but was at a loss to know exactly how he ought to address her. At last he went to the door of the drawing-room and said:

"I propose to make an examination of the locality, and find out if I can where we are. I will be back in a short time."

He fancied he heard the sound of suppressed laughter, and he smiled in sympathy with her evident appreciation of the humour of the situation. Such an outlook rendered the crisis less embarrassing. Then he remembered that he had made almost exactly the same statement of intention a few moments before, and began to fear the laughter was at him rather than with him.

"I thought you knew where we were already," came the voice at last. "You said we were in a gravel-pit."

"Oh, I know that much, but the knowledge struck me as limited, and I propose to extend it."

"A very happy idea. Isn't there any depot here?"

"There doesn't seem to be."

"Well, I suppose the first thing to do is to find out where the nearest telegraph office is."

"Yes, I think so."

"I suppose this car is disabled—a broken wheel, perhaps. Don't you imagine they will send back a locomotive for it from the first place the express stops at, if there is an extra engine there. Or perhaps they will telegraph for one. They can't leave a car like this for long, but must take it to the nearest repair shop."

"I should say they will do exactly as you suggest," replied Jim, astonished that a young woman should show such knowledge of the working of a railway line and such practical application of her information. Somehow the mending of a sleeping car seemed rather out of the usual sphere of feminine occupation.

"Very well, then, you go, and if the engine comes I shall ask the driver to whistle, so that you will know help is here. I shall also make them wait until you return."

"Thank you very much."

Monro stepped down from the car and walked over to the main track. "A confident young woman," he said to himself. She evidently has not the least doubt that she can boss the wrecking gang when it arrives."

There was little to be learned from looking up and down the vacant line, for vision in either direction was limited. The track followed the curving shores of the lake, and swung out of sight a short distance north and south. He was in doubt which way to travel, but finally kept the direction to which he had set his face when he left New York the night before. He soon espied a farm-house on the side of the hill overlooking the railway, and thither he bent his steps. There was no man about the place, but an exceedingly inquisitive woman standing at the door shot out questions enough for a dozen. She was much interested in the fact that a sleeping-car had been dropped off the night express, and wanted to know all about it. Monro told her as much as he thought was necessary, then made some inquiries on his own account. How far away was the nearest telegraph office, and in what direction? Five miles to the north, along the line, and seven miles by the road, but it was not much of a depot—a freight shed, rather—and very few trains stopped there. Yes, there was a telegraph office, she thought, but she wasn't sure. Bound to be a telegraph office of some kind for the running of the trains. She wondered why they didn't take the car to the Junction. There were long switches at that point, where freight trains waited to let expresses go by. No, she didn't think he could get a horse and buggy in the neighbourhood, least not nearer than

the village, and that was further on than the Junction, so there wouldn't be much use in going there for one, would there? Well, they called it the Junction, anyhow, but she wasn't sure that any line branched off; rather thought one did, though. She had been very seldom at the Junction. It wasn't much of a place, even the village. He might get a team and a waggon if he waited till the men came home at noon, but they were pretty busy just now, and she didn't know that any of them would care to go unless something had broken in the fields, when they would have to make a journey anyhow to the blacksmith shop, and then as like as not one of the boys would go on horseback. For her part, she would rather walk the track. It was no distance for a stalwart young man on a lovely summer morning, and besides it was a beautiful stroll, along the lake all the way. She didn't know as she had anything to eat—much; but if he wasn't particular there was home-made bread and good fresh butter. She could fry some eggs, or would he have them boiled? Then there was coffee, such as it was. Oh, yes; there was plenty of milk, of course. Would he come in? It would be ready in a jiffy. Wanted to take it to the car? Oh, then there was someone else there that had been left as well as he. Do tell! Why didn't he come too? Oh, an invalid. That was too bad. Hope it isn't anything catching.

Monro was nearly in despair at the questioning woman's reluctance to cease her inquiries and get the repast he had ordered; but at last it was all ready for him, and still hearing no sound of the approach of a wrecking train, he left the farmhouse with a miscellaneous burden that presented some difficulties in the carrying.

The palatial car stood in the gravel-pit, looking most incongruous in its rough surroundings. As he came nearer he saw the figure of the girl outlined against the glancing water, walking slowly on the firm sandy beach. Even a man could not help noticing how neatly her well made travelling dress fitted her, and to Monro it seemed the height of fashion, which doubtless it was. With a

coquetry which, however, was lost on him, she had not put over it the grey gossamer duster, which hung in folds of film across her arm. Hearing him approach, she turned toward him a face which was not only lovely but radiated great good nature as well. She had some difficulty in suppressing the tendency of her pretty lips to smile, but the dancing light in her eyes could not be quenched, and he likened it to the sparkle of the newly risen sun on the blue water of the lake, from which the mist had now entirely disappeared.

"Well?" she said. "And what State are we in?"

"A state of uncertainty still," replied Jim, with a smile. "I really forgot to ask. I suspect Vermont, but I'm not sure. Perhaps we're in Canada."

"It's more than likely. They would never dare play such a trick as this on us in our own country—God's country, as my father calls it."

"The nearest depot is five miles away, to the north. The woman up at the farmhouse says she thinks a buggy can be got at the village; so if you will wait here I will go to the Junction, and come back with whatever vehicle I can find."

"Nonsense. What's five miles? I don't mind walking in the least. That's what I'm going to Canada for. Besides, even if there were a buggy here I would not go by road, for the locomotive will very likely come while we are on the way; then, when we reached the Junction, we should be no better off."

"The locomotive may come from the south, you know."

"That's true. I hadn't thought of that. What have you there?"

"An attempt at breakfast. Some bread and butter, coffee, milk, hard-boiled eggs and a whole apple-pie. It's the best I could do."

"How delightful! I never expected this. To tell the truth, instead of admiring the beautiful scenery, I was just regretting that they had not abandoned a dining-car as well. I think this sweet, cool air must be the cause of such a departure from all that should be expected of a

person at the foot of the hills by the margin of an enchanting lake."

"Do you prefer to breakfast in the car?"

"Oh, no, no. That would be misusing our privileges. The air of New York seems still in that car, and how frightfully hot it was in the city yesterday! There is a smooth dry rock a little further down on the beach that will do as table and chairs both. Can I help you with anything? Let me carry the pitcher, at least."

"This is all right, thank you. I believe I am already qualified as an expert waiter, although I won't do any boasting until I get everything safely to the table rock."

"My name is Miss Van Ness," she said, suddenly, as they walked along the firm sand together. "I live in New York and am on a pleasure trip to Canada. Just as we have to be our own waiters this morning, I suppose we may as well be our own introducers."

"My name is Monro, also of New York, but a two-days' resident only in that city. I am on a business trip to Montreal, representing for the time being the firm of Glassthrop & Co., Broadway—patent agents, company promoters and people of that sort."

This explanation brought them to the place for which they were searching, and the girl threw her folded duster on the edge of the rock and seated herself there. The gentle waves lapped the firm fine sand almost at her feet. Monro had carried the big hot tin coffee-pot in one hand, while the other supported a wooden pail which held everything else, and which had to be balanced gingerly so that the pitcher containing the milk would not topple over.

"Let me pour out the coffee," said Miss Van Ness; and this she did, when he had arranged the two cups. All in all it was a very jolly breakfast, the inspiring air giving a zest to it which might have been absent in New York. Having put coffee-pot, pitcher, cups and plates all in the wooden pail again, the two started on their journey up the line, Monro deflecting from the road when opposite the farmhouse, so that he might deliver to its owner her belongings. The woman was at the door again. Monro

had paid her well before he took away the provender, but now he thanked her effusively. He was aware that the woman's eyes were upon the trim figure walking slowly along the ties far below.

"Oh, *that's* the invalid, is it?" she remarked, with some asperity.

"That's the invalid, madam," said Monro, with a guilty laugh.

"She's got better pretty quick."

"Who wouldn't, madam, after such excellent cooking? I assure you we don't get bread so good or butter so sweet as that in the city."

The woman's grimness relaxed, and the trace of a smile came to her thin lips. She sighed.

"Ah, well, good luck to you both. It is nice to be young."

"Thank you, madam," and Jim took off his hat with the sweep of a courtier. The next instant he was bounding down the hill, and leaped the stone wall at the foot without putting a hand on it.

"I have thought it all out, and I understand it now," cried Miss Van Ness, with all the bright eagerness of a little girl who has made a wonderful discovery. Jim moderated his pace as he came up with her.

"Yes? And what are your conclusions?" he asked, just as if he understood the subject of her meditations.

"Well, you see, there was probably another train following the express. Perhaps they knew that it had already left the siding on which it stood when the express passed north, and of course they could not telegraph and stop it. I examined the sleeping-car while you were up at the farm, and one of its wheels is broken, almost split in two. It's a wonder there was not a smash-up as it was. There would have been before it had run another mile. Of course they would send a man back to flag the oncoming train, but this morning it was misty on the lake, and perhaps during the night we were running through a thick fog. If that were the case there was every chance of the following train running past the flag-man. The crew must have been in a panic, with half the express on

the main line and half up that gravel-pit siding; just the proper conditions for a frightful wreck; so there would be scant time to rouse the occupants of our car, and get them moved on to the train in front. Porters always lose their heads in a case of that kind, and I have no doubt our own porter, with chattering teeth, told the conductor that everybody was out. Still the conductor ought to have seen for himself, though I can imagine how anxious he was to pull out and whistle back the flag-man. That's how it happened, I'm sure."

"Then you don't intend to sue the company, Miss Van Ness? You are pleading extenuating circumstances for it."

"Sue the company? I don't understand you."

"Why, you know, you said when I hesitated to chop off the lock that I had ground for suing the company, whereas I feared they would imprison me for house-breaking or train-wrecking."

"Oh, yes. You might bring an action against the company, but I'm barred. You see, I travel on a pass, and I believe the conditions are I have no remedy in a matter of this kind. And then, again, filial duty would keep me from saying a word about this. I strongly suspect my father is part owner of this line. If I knew just where we were I should be able to tell you for certain. He is a railroad man, and so high up in the service that his only daughter can travel all over the country without paying fare. Isn't that delightful? Do you pay your fare?"

"Alas, yes."

"So many people do! It always seems a waste of money to me, but then I suppose somebody must pay or we couldn't keep the trains running."

The young man laughed, and she looked brightly at him, a smile on her own fair face, the colour in her cheeks the more vivid from the exercise of walking in that brisk air.

"What are you laughing at?" she asked.

"You said 'we,' as if you were running the trains in conjunction with your father."

"Well, I am, in a measure. He always calls me his

assistant manager. Perhaps you won't believe I have ridden on an engine."

"I can hardly imagine you doing that; it is all so greasy and smoky and cindery, and you look—" He paused, abruptly.

"Yes, and I look—? Go on. Please don't stop when you come to the most interesting part."

"Well, you look more like a nymph of this lovely lake than—than anything else." He ended lamely and in some confusion, flushing awkwardly, for he was unused to paying compliments to fair ladies. His toe stubbed against one of the ties, and he stumbled, recovering just in time to save himself from a fall. Ties form an inconvenient pavement, although the girl trod lightly on them, as if she had been accustomed to walking the track all her life. Jim blushed more deeply than ever as he regained his equilibrium. The merry laughter of Miss Van Ness echoed from the rocks.

"Am I so countrified as all that?" she said. "I looked up at you a while ago when you were bowing so grandly with a flourish of the hat to the lady of the lake who stood at the farmhouse door. Were you telling her she was a nymph?"

"I was telling her something much more practical, which I think pleased her well. I praised her baking of bread and making of butter."

"Oh, I see. Then you have a stock of compliments to suit all tastes and all ranks of life."

"I can't allow that, Miss Van Ness. There are no ranks of life in this country."

"Ah, yes, you told me you had been but one day in New York. You'll know ever so much better than that before you are there a year."

"All men are born free and equal," quoted Jim, in self-defence.

"Perhaps, but all women are not, thank goodness. However this may be a mere ruse on your part to lead me into a political or social discussion, where I refuse to follow you, and thus lose sight of the fact that you tacitly admit you have a stock of compliments. Please let me

hear them, one after another, from the eulogy of the bread to the flattery suitable for the wife of a president of the United States."

"You wrong me, Miss Van Ness. I don't think I ever flattered anyone in my life; rather too much the other way, I fancy. I had a genuine admiration for that woman's bread and butter, just as I had a genuine admiration for—for—"

"For the nymph of the lake?"

"Exactly, and thank you, Miss Van Ness."

"You are quite welcome, Mr. Monro; and I am glad you are grateful, for I helped you over a very difficult place, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

They both laughed in sheer enjoyment of the morning, and their walk and their youth, as the farmer's wife had said. The laugh came back to them from the cliff, and seemed to dissipate itself in silvery undertones over the placid waters of the lake.

"What a wonderful echo!" she cried, and, facing the rocks, ran up and down an octave with a musical voice that had evidently been well trained. "Are you a college man?" she asked, abruptly, turning suddenly towards him.

"Yes, in a way. Do you want the college yell?"

"Oh, do give it!"

Jim braced himself up, filled his broad chest and gave utterance to a long, spasmodic, ear-rending cry, the like of which had certainly never been heard in that locality since the last war-whoop of the savages resounded on the margin of the lake. The cry seemed to shatter against the face of the cliff and come quivering back to them like the laughter of imprisoned gnomes in the rocks.

"Oh, how delightful!" cried the girl. "That's where men's colleges always will have the advantage of ours. We can scream, but we can't yell."

They resumed their walk along the ties, easy for her because her short steps just fitted the closely laid sleepers; more difficult for him, as the beams were too near together for his long strides, and too far apart to make every

second one a convenient foot-rest. The two talked as gaily and inconsequently as a pair of children, and were more friendly with each other at the end of that stroll of an hour and half than they would have become during a year's acquaintance in town. She told him of the delight of travelling all through the West to the Pacific coast in a private car with her father; of the secrets pertaining to important railway conferences which she knew, and which newspaper men would have given much to fathom; of journeying in Switzerland, Germany and Italy; of singing lessons in Vienna, and what not. When the college was mentioned she professed some eagerness to learn about co-education in the West, an idea which was making its way but slowly toward the rising sun. She was in doubt whether or not it was desirable that young men and young women should attend the same classes, and yet why not? It must be rather jolly. Did he think so? He saw no objection, and related incidents. Were the girls nice? So far as he knew they were, but his comrade, Ben McAllister, could testify with greater accuracy on that point. Ben was engaged to one of them, and at that moment was visiting her. Jim, it seemed from his own account, had confined his attention more strictly to his books. At this innocent announcement the girl walking by his side glanced shyly askance at his honest face, with a slight, incredulous smile on her pretty lips.

"Ah, there is the Junction at last," she said, as a turn in the road brought the station buildings into sight. "I wonder if we have broken a record in pedestrianism? We seemed to walk pretty fast."

"I doubt it," said Jim, looking at his watch. "We have accomplished about two and a half miles in an hour."

"Is that all? Well, the echoes and the scenery account for slow progress."

"And the conversation," suggested Jim.

"Yes, and the conversation," she assented. "That shortened the way, but lengthened the time. I'm afraid I did most of the talking. I generally do. It's a woman's privilege, you know."

But Jim maintained he had contributed his share, and

thus they arrived at the long platform that lay between the low wooden buildings and the railway tracks, passing a great circular tub of a dripping tank, elevated on a timber framework, which stood like a burly sentinel guarding the approach to the Junction.

CHAPTER IV

"I SAT UPON A PROMONTORY AND HEARD A MERMAID"

THE magic name of Van Ness stirred into activity and most respectful courtesy the amazed station agent and the telegraph operator.

"Not Mr. Van Ness, the manager?" said the latter.

"Yes, he is my father, and I want to send a telegram to him, also some others to Montreal, but I have left my purse in my hand-bag, and that is in the drawing-room of the sleeping-car. The door of the car we had to break open, so perhaps some one should be sent to fasten it, and the messenger might bring my satchel when he returns."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the station agent. "I'll send two men right now with a hand-car, and they'll bring back your things in a jiffy; but you don't need money, Miss Van Ness, to do all the telegraphing you want."

"If you will come with me, Miss Van Ness," said the operator, leading the way to the telegraph office, where a chattering brass instrument was soliloquising, "you can write out your messages."

She sent a long despatch to her father, a shorter one to the friends at Montreal who were expecting her, and a still shorter one to the station master at the Grand Trunk terminus, asking him to assure the French maid of her safety, for the woman, Miss Van Ness knew, would be raving about the station in terror at finding herself alone, and would say things that might get into the papers; so, being the true daughter of a railway man, she had all his dread of anything getting into the press which could be magnified into a narrow escape from death or disaster on the line, which indeed the incident was. So she asked the operator to send her telegram to the Montreal station-

master first, and the messages to her friends afterward. When she reached the platform again Monro was standing there, watching two energetic men pump themselves out of sight round the curve, working the oscillating lever of the hand-car as if it was the brake of an old-fashioned fire-engine, one head down and the other up alternately, until they disappeared along the crooked line.

"Well, the telegraphing is done with," she announced, "and now there is nothing to do but wait."

"The station agent tells me," said Monro, "that there's a local due to pass this place in two hours and a half. It doesn't stop here unless it is signalled, but he is going to flag it if we want him to."

"Two hours and a half! Add to that the half-hour late—locals are always late; they're side-tracked even for a fast freight—that is three hours at least. Oh, we shall have the road stirred up to a fine state of excitement long before that time, or I don't know my father. I've just told the operator to flag me when he has a reply, and he has promised to put out a red signal at the corner of the telegraph office when a message arrives. This is such an uninteresting place to wait in. What do you say to climbing the hill and getting a view of the land and water scapes?"

"Delightful, if you will give me permission to go with you."

"Permission? Why, I have just asked you to come," she said, smilingly; "and now I command you."

"If the commands of Mr. Van Ness, your father, are as willingly obeyed as those of his daughter, he must have a well-disciplined staff."

"It is very efficient, so perhaps the right of rule is hereditary in the Van Ness family."

"I shall be the last to dispute it," said Jim, with a laugh, as they crossed the railway line together and mounted the steep hill.

They ultimately attained the edge of a wood, and Miss Van Ness declared nothing was to be gained by climbing higher, as the trees shut out the view; and indeed the prospect already spread out before them was enticing

enough to satisfy the most exacting. The glittering lake and the dim, misty hills beyond formed a most alluring picture. The railway was hidden for the most part, and when seen between the jutting headlands was too far away to mar the outlook. They sat down together on a fallen log, and for a time gazed at the panorama in silence. At last they caught glimpses of the hand-car returning. "How quick they have been!" she said. "They have beaten our time, and I hope they have my hand-bag safe."

"Why didn't you let me know it was in the car; I could have carried it for you."

"To tell the truth, I forgot all about it; but in any case I could not have paid you for the porterage, and I *can* pay the two men; besides, they need the money, and you don't."

"How do you know?"

"Do you?" she asked, quickly, looking at him.

"Would you lend me some?" he laughed.

"Why, of course. How much? I am really more deeply indebted to you than to the men we were speaking of. Indeed I don't know what I should have done without you this morning, for although I asked you so airily to break open that door, I doubt if I could have done it myself. Yes, and there's the breakfast, too. I owe that to you also, but with the ingratitude of the well-fed, I had forgotten."

"I must confess that the view you are kind enough to take of the incident had not occurred to me, for the pleasure of making your acquaintance puts the indebtedness all on my side."

Monro managed to get the sentence completed, but it was with evident difficulty, and he gazed fixedly at the ground below him, inwardly reviling the commonplace and obvious remark he had made, wishing he could think of something light and brilliant to say, or at least had the skill to change the topic of conversation without appearing to do so. The girl glanced slyly at him with quiet enjoyment. He was so refreshingly different from the society young men she knew. However, Monro pulled

himself together, and abandoned the region of complimentary small talk.

"I think it likely that I shall be a railway manager myself some day," he continued. All my luck seems to run along railway lines. The reason I am here is because of a railway incident in Michigan a few nights ago. My friend and myself were stealing a ride—"

"Were what?"

"Oh, I forgot you are the daughter of a railway manager. That was a give-away on my part, wasn't it? I hope you won't inform on me."

"I can't inform until I know your crime. How do you steal a ride? By getting under the seat and avoiding the conductor when he comes round for tickets?"

"No. We don't patronise passenger trains, but accept the hospitality of an empty car on a freight. It is the stalwart brakeman one has to avoid, not the conductor."

"How jolly! Please tell me about it."

Jim told his story with the utmost simplicity, but the narrative had all the graphic reality of the actual, and the girl gave absorbed attention to it. Here was the railway business viewed from the under side, and the aspect was new to her, differing as much from the Pullman car standpoint as Jim himself differed from the polished young man of Fifth avenue.

Time passed quickly, and it was Monro who first noticed that the red flag was flying down at the station.

"Alas! Your telegram has come," he said, rising to his feet with a sigh.

"Now that is a true compliment," she replied, laughing and springing up beside him, "and I heartily echo your exclamation. What an exciting life you have been leading! I am much interested in your man Mitchell; cold-blooded individual, I imagine."

"Oh, I don't know. Typically business, I should say. I took him to be the shrewd, unemotional business man of New York."

"I doubt his being a type. I am acquainted with many New York business men, and I like them exceedingly.

However, a man who had dealings with them, might not be of my opinion. We women, after all, get a very one-sided view of life, but now and then events come to my knowledge that show business to be a cruel thing. My father, who is the best and kindest of men, would crush an opponent very ruthlessly, I imagine, where the interests of his beloved road are concerned. That is what makes for success, I suppose."

"Success for he victors, yes; but it seems a pity there should be any vanquished."

"I quite agree with you."

They had walked slowly down the hill together, with none of the eagerness of persons who expect important messages, and now they had reached the railway line.

The telegraph operator came to meet them, and Jim found himself wishing that useful man were not so confoundedly officious. He handed Miss Van Ness a despatch, which she read.

"Oh, my father has ordered the superintendent's private car to come for me, and he says it ought to reach here within an hour after this message. When did the telegram come? Ah, yes, here's the time at the top."

"The special will arrive in about fifteen minutes, Miss Van Ness. They are running it right through without any delay, I can tell you," said the operator.

When they reached the waiting-room the young woman found her forgotten bag awaiting her on a bench. She took her purse from it, and a roll of bills from the purse.

"I wish you would give these to the hand-car men," she said to the station-agent.

"Oh, they're all right," he demurred. "They don't expect anything, and deserve nothing; it's all in the day's work."

"Well, they will be the more surprised," she insisted, giving him the money, and continued: "You mustn't think I am going to forget you or the telegraph clerk either. If I have any influence at headquarters, and I think I have, there will be two promotions."

"Well, miss, this isn't the liveliest place in the world,

and I don't think either of us would object to a change for the better; many thanks to you, Miss Van Ness."

"Talk of the visits of the angels," said Jim when she approached him with a card in her hand. "You scatter benefactions wherever you go."

"And very pleasant things they are to scatter, so here is yours. I will give it to you now for fear I forget it later. I have written my Montreal address on my card, and thus I give you permission to call upon me, your reward being that I shall introduce you to a very charming young lady, the daughter of the house where I am staying. Their customs are rather English, and if you call about five o'clock any afternoon I can promise you afternoon tea. Perhaps you will let me have your card in exchange?"

Now why should an honest young man tell an untruth and be afraid to confess his poverty? Jim stammered something to the effect that his card-case had gone through with his baggage to Montreal, whereas he never possessed a card-case in his life, and had no baggage to check. Perhaps the clear eyes of the girl saw into this deception, and perhaps they didn't. One never can tell exactly of what a demure-looking maiden may be thinking. But Jim mentally blessed the station-master for saving the situation by interrupting them.

"Here comes the special, miss," he said as he picked up her satchel. The long whistle of the locomotive was heard in the distance, and presently the short train comprising engine, baggage-car, and private coach, came to a standstill at the platform. The superintendent's car was a sumptuous carriage, with great plate-glass windows on either side, through which Jim saw the luxurious interior. A table in the centre had a snowy white cloth laid on it, and from a richly-chased silver holder spread a large bouquet of radiant flowers. Silver, crystal and plate glittered on the table, and it was evident that the occupant of the coach was not expected to starve. An exceedingly black negro in a white uniform stood upon the platform of the car, a smile like a chalk-mark spreading across his face. He sprang nimbly down and placed a carpeted foot-stool

on the boards at the bottom of the steps, then taking the bag from the station-master, he stood aside deferentially as Miss Van Ness sprang lightly up the short stair.

"Good-bye, Miss Van Ness," said Jim, holding out his hand.

The girl stopped and turned quickly, a flash of surprise in her eyes. "Why, you are coming?"

"No. I shall wait for the local."

"Nonsense! This special will get into Montreal hours before the local, or any other train on the road. Of *course* you are coming."

It would have been difficult, perhaps, for Jim to explain his state of mind. and impossible for his historian to give any sane reason for his conduct. It seemed a sudden impulse, hardening as suddenly into irrevocable resolution. He had quite intended all along to go with her to Montreal, and had been congratulating himself on a pleasant journey with a charming companion, yet here, almost in spite of himself, he had swiftly arrived at a determination not to enter that car, and he knew quite well no persuasion would overcome it, pitying himself that such was the case, for of all things on earth he most desired was to do what he had just said he would not.

The girl stood on the platform, her small, daintily gloved hands resting on the silver-plated rail, and looked down on him with wonder in her wide-open eyes and a little line of perplexity on her smooth, fair brow.

"It is very kind of you to invite me, Miss Van Ness, but I'm really in no hurry—and—and—as you suggested this morning, I—reserve my right of action against the road for delaying me, and so, you see—"

"I see that you are not very logical, Mr. Monro. You are in no hurry, yet you talk of an action for delay. Isn't the road doing all it can to make amends for what was, after all, an accident?"

"Oh, the road isn't sending this car for me."

"Yes, it is. You had better change your mind, Mr. Monro."

Jim smiled the forlorn smile of a man with a toothache and shook his head sadly, inwardly maligning himself as

a boorish imbecile; sorry for himself, yet unable to overcome his own obstinacy. He glanced up at her and saw a misty film dim the brightness of her eyes; then she drew herself up proudly from the bending position that had something of beseechment in it.

"Oh, very well," she said coldly; then with exuberant vivacity cried to the station-master:

"Thank you ever so much for your kindness. I shall not forget. Please tell the engine-driver to go ahead."

The engineer had been hanging out of the cab window looking to the rear of his short train. The station-master held his arm aloft and let it drop like a semaphore.

"All right, Billy!" he shouted, and the unseen hand of the engineer gave a tug at the whistle rope, his own head and shoulders disappearing. The car began to glide away as smoothly as a launching ship, and Jim felt a maddening impulse to run after it and swing himself aboard, but he stood stock still. Miss Van Ness seemed about to withdraw without further greeting, but she half turned and again faced him.

"Good-bye, Mr. Monro," she said.

"Good-bye, Miss Van Ness."

She entered the car, but looked back once more from the doorway, and Jim, standing bareheaded, saw the flutter of a white handkerchief from the rapidly lessening end of the car. He waved his hat as the door closed and the special whisked out of sight round the promontory.

"You—damned—fool!" he growled to himself.

"What did you say, sir?" asked the amazed station-master, with a threat in his voice.

"I wasn't talking to you. What time does the local stop here?"

"It doesn't stop here. I told you that before."

"But you said you would flag it."

"I said I'd flag it for Miss Van Ness. I didn't say I'd flag it for you."

"Now, look here, my man, don't make any mistake about this. I'm stranded here through the fault of your company; if you've the least doubt about flagging that train for me, you had better telegraph and find out. If

you are expecting promotion don't make it difficult for Miss Van Ness by committing an unnecessary error."

The station-master scratched his chin and concluded that this was not bad advice. He telegraphed, and shortly after came out to a very dissatisfied man and said to him:

"The local has orders to stop here and pick you up, sir."

"All right," commented Jim. Then he went down to the margin of the lake and sombrely threw stones into the water, cursing himself as the greatest simpleton in all the land, with which estimate many of us will find little difficulty in agreeing.

CHAPTER V

"FIRST, SIR, I PRAY, WHAT IS YOUR TITLE?"

WONDERFUL are the facilities possessed by these railway people. They own the modern equivalent of the flying carpet, which made travelling easy when the stories of the Arabian Nights were first related. As the special sped along the rails with a clear right of way, Grace Van Ness wandered somewhat aimlessly round the spacious saloon of the private car, now burying her face in the fragrant bouquet, now selecting a volume from the little bookcase in the corner, now sitting at the piano and striking a few chords, now settling herself in a comfortable rocking-chair, trying to become interested in a book, and failing. The rocker proved unsuitable because of the swaying of the car, and the porter, who hovered about, anxious to be of service, placed a cane chair by the great sheet of plate-glass, arranged the cushions dexteriously, and there she sat, quiet at last, resting her chin on her hand, gazing out at the scenery. Stations flashed past of no particular interest, for the special was not timed to halt at any of them; but suddenly there came a shudder of the brake and a slowing down of the train, which paused rather than stopped, while a bareheaded man handed up an envelope to the porter. It was a telegram for Grace Van Ness from Sir Murray Henderson, the Canadian railway magnate, her Montreal host. The dispatch informed her that he had received her message and that he had been in communication with her father, offering the hospitality of his own private car before learning that the superintendent's was already on the way. His daughter Gussie, however, was not to be deprived of her expected journey, so Sir Murray and she would be waiting for Miss Van Ness when the special reached the Canadian

border line, and if she would be good enough to join them, the superintendent's car might return to Plattsburgh, to be ready for the next damsel errant who became mislaid on the Montreal-New York railway system.

For the first time since she entered the car the girl smiled as she read the genial baronet's jovial letter, for it was as long as a letter, so reckless are magnates in the use of electricity. Then she murmured to herself: "I'm glad he didn't come, after all."

When the special was brought to a stand at the frontier station, Grace found her friend Gussie Henderson waiting with her father. The girls greeted each other warmly, in the emotional fashion of feminine human nature; then the New Yorker impulsively stretched out her hands to the florid-faced great man with white bushy side-whiskers, which emphasised the ruddy complexion they framed.

"Why, Sir Murray!" she cried, "Sir Murray Henderson! I shall keep on repeating that name all day. And you don't seem a bit changed either. I expected you to be ever so formal. I didn't know but I should have to kneel, or curtsy, or do something old-fashioned when I met you again. Doesn't it make a difference?"

"Now, you young minx," laughed the celebrity in a bluff large-hearted way, "you are not to begin on me in this fashion. I've had enough of it. That's the disadvantage of living so close to a republic. You have no respect for—"

"Oh, but I have," interrupted the girl breathlessly. "I'm quite ready to kneel right here on these boards, if it is the proper thing to do, Sir Murray. Why, I've been going about New York two inches taller ever since I heard that you were made a baronet; and boasting, too; saying carelessly, as if it were a small matter, 'Sir Murray Henderson, K. C. B., has invited me to—'"

"There isn't any K. C. B., you goose."

"Well, there is, when I speak of you. It's all right—merely a division of labour. The Queen gives you the 'Sir,' and I give you the K. C. B. I tell you, we women spoil you between us, don't we, Gussie?"

She tucked her hand under his arm, snuggling up to him, while his daughter occupied a similar position on the other side, and, the old man chuckling with much good-nature, they walked up the platform to his private car, which was in waiting for them.

" I suppose your luggage has gone on," he said.

" My luggage! How lovely that sounds! Yes, it was checked through, although it was only baggage when it started."

" You're a baggage yourself, and I know I'm in for a dreadful time, you disrespectful little Yank."

" Thank you, Sir Murray; and is Lady Murray quite well?"

" Lady Henderson, if you don't mind."

" Oh, that's it, is it? How does your mother stand it, Gussie? And, Gussie, what are you? Don't you and I get any reflected glory out of all this? I thought I might become the Honourable Grace Van Ness, at least just on the score of old friendship."

" Oh, I guess we could manage that with a ' dis,' for you do take a most dishonourable advantage of an old man who can't help himself," growled the new baronet.

" You shouldn't say ' I guess,' Sir Murray. I don't know much about the rules of knighthood, but I am sure ' I guess' is eliminated."

By this time they were comfortably settled in the drawing-room of Sir Murray's car, an apartment less gaudy perhaps than the one she had just quitted, but rich and homelike in its appointments, differing from the other as a residence differs from a hotel. A table was laid for tea, the silver urn steaming over a spirit lamp; instead of a negro there was a trim maid-servant in white cap and apron, who, with quiet deftness, performed the services required of her.

" Tea is quite ready, sir," she said, in a subdued tone, with a slight accent on the ' quite ' that fell on the sensitive ears of Miss Van Ness with a suggestion of something foreign.

" And now, Grace," said the railway man with a sigh of relief that he was thus deftly escaping further banter

on his newly-acquired title, "what I want to know is, what happened?"

"Precisely what I want to know, too, Sir Murray. Of course I've read it up. You knelt, and her majesty tapped you lightly on the shoulder with a real sword and said, 'Rise, Sir Murray Henderson,' and you rose gracefully, I hope. And where did this take place: at Windsor castle or at Buckingham palace? At Windsor castle, I trust, but then I don't know. I shouldn't be able to make up my mind if I had the choice, which I suppose you hadn't, and that takes such a weight off one's mind. Do tell me all about it. Don't you see I'm just dying to hear the particulars."

"Now, my girl, I give you fair warning, I'll lock you up in the pantry if you keep on."

"Can a baronet do that? My!"

"Yes, he can, when he's scoffed at in his own car."

"But not the pantry, Sir Murray. Surely you've had a new dungeon put on since you returned from England?"

"You'll find it dungeon enough when you exasperate me sufficiently. Why don't you respect our cherished institutions? Goodness knows you people are sensitive enough about your own when any foreigner lays hands on them."

"Why, Sir Murray, you persist in destroying my best loved ideals. Do you know, I have long thought that republics stand in their own light by not bestowing titles; it is such a cheap system of prize-giving—"

"There you go again. Now, that's pure feminine envy, in the guise of a lofty down-looking on masculine vanity. A cheap system indeed! I like the cheek of that."

"Well, you must admit it's cheap, because it doesn't cost the government anything. That's where it differs from a pension list. Indeed I believe it brings in a revenue to the government. In a book I have read on the subject it says something about newly-made nobles having to pay certain fees, I forget how much or what for, but I'm in right down earnest. Our country is like a paper that gives only money prizes. Over sixty thousand persons

crowd into Washington to secure the salaries whenever a new President is elected; office-seekers, we call them, and I think it pitiful, for they are sixty thousand confessed failures who look to the government to support them; sixty thousand persons who admit they cannot make money enough to support themselves. I think it lowering to the dignity and moral tone of the country that its prizes are all in cash. We always estimate success in dollars. Now, the noble things of life are not done for money. A soldier does not lead a forlorn hope for what there is to be made out of it. If we women ever get into power at Washington, we'll change all that."

" You women are in power, my dear, everywhere. Just notice how I am hanging on your words."

" You listen to us, but you won't act on our suggestions until we have votes. When that time comes, beware. Every woman is at heart—"

" Now, Grace, stop. Don't quote Pope's libellous line in my hearing."

" —Is at heart an aristocrat, Sir Murray. We are not a bit republican, although we sometimes pretend to be."

" Let's see, Gussie; isn't there a lord or two on that committee sent out from England to investigate our railway affairs?" asked Sir Murray suavely.

" Only one, father, and he is sixty years old."

" Dear me, so he is. I'm very sorry, Grace, for I really wanted to reserve one for you, but I believe we are a little short of lords in Montreal just now. You see, they all go to New York and Newport."

" Couldn't you get your sixty-year-old noble to adopt me? Surely such an ingenious man as Sir Murray Henderson is not going to be defeated by a mere temporary scarcity."

" By Jove, I'll import one; there's no duty on 'em. But with all this inconsequential talk we are missing the important point. I did not quite understand from our telegram exactly what took place. Was there an accident? How came you to be left behind?"

" That doesn't happen very often, does it, Sir Murray?

There was a broken wheel on the sleeper. I imagine we were in the thick of a fog, and that they feared the oncoming of another train, so they were naturally in a hurry. They side-tracked the sleeper in a gravel-pit, and moved out the passengers as quickly as possible. Luckily the broken wheel was on the last coach, which made the side-tracking speedy. I occupied the drawing-room, and thus was overlooked."

"What a remarkable thing! There was no one else left behind, of course?"

"You see my maid slept in the next car forward, otherwise there would have been two of us. In fact if she had been in my car and had been awakened she would never have gone away without me, and so even I should not have been overlooked."

"Weren't you frightened when you awoke and found yourself alone?" Gussie inquired.

"Oh, not at all. It was broad daylight, and a moment's investigation showed me what had occurred."

"Had you nothing to eat till the special came? I suppose you walked on to the nearest station."

"Yes, but it wasn't far, and the men at the Junction were very kind. A farmhouse woman provided me with breakfast."

Gussie gazed admiringly with wide-open eyes at the heroine of such an adventure. She was a quiet girl, and spent her time in absorbed contemplation of her vivacious friend, who now and then smiled confidingly at her.

When they reached Montreal Sir Murray's carriage was waiting for them, and it took them quickly through the city, and then more slowly up the steep mountain street to the commodious stone-built mansion that was to be the temporary home of Grace Van Ness. Her room had large windows giving a wide view over the spreading city, with the blue waters of the broad St. Lawrence beyond, crossed by the long line of the Victoria bridge, distance mitigating in some measure its extreme utilitarian ugliness. Grace Van Ness was standing at the window gazing at the view when the door opened, and Gussie came in.

"O, Grace," she cried breathlessly, "I have such a secret to tell you. I was afraid to speak above a whisper in the car because father might guess that I knew. But now that we are alone—It's all about you, Grace."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Grace, turning to her excited visitor. "Nothing dreadful, I hope."

"Perhaps you can guess it." Gussie naturally wished to make the most of her discovery, and expected at least payment in the interest and attention of her listener. "It's about you and a young man."

"Oh," whispered Grace, with something like a gasp. Had Sir Murray, then, learned that a young man had been left in the sleeping-car, and were her evasions when questioned entirely futile? With knitted brow she rapidly ran over in her mind what had been said on the subject of the accident. She thought she had given no clew, but was not sure. Gussie regarded her with delighted and absorbed attention; she now had no complaint to make of interest lacking.

"I see you know whom I mean. O, Grace, you must tell me about him. Is he good-looking?"

"Passably; yes. I think he is good-looking—as men go."

"And talks well? I do like men who talk well. I could listen all day."

"Yes, he talks well enough. I've promised to introduce him to you, so you can judge for yourself, Gussie."

"O, Grace, is he coming to Montreal?"

"Why, of course."

"Then the plot will fail. O, dear Grace, I'm so glad. That's just as it is in books, only there's lots and lots of difficulties before it gets so far."

"What plot? Gussie, what are you talking about?"

"Dearest Grace, won't you make me your confidante? Interesting girls like you always have a confidante, only most confidantes betray, but that I'll never do. I'll plan and scheme, and we'll have secret meetings up on the top of the mountain, which is a splendid place, with such a view!"

"I shall call you goosie instead of Gussie in a moment if you keep on like that. There will be no secret meetings. I asked the young man to call on me here."

"But that would never, never do, Grace. Mr. Van Ness will discover all, for father is sure to write to him."

"Well, what of it? I shouldn't mind."

"Oh, that's because you don't know. I suppose you would never guess why your father sent you here."

"Papa? He didn't. I wanted to come myself and see you. I think he suggested my coming, but I'm not even sure of that. He spoke of my going to Europe this summer, but I believe I proposed Canada myself."

"O, you poor, persecuted girl, you have no idea of the web that has been woven round you; but I have discovered all their machinations, and we will circumvent them yet. Do you love him very much? You won't forget him, will you, Grace, and when you write to him I will carry your letters, for they will never suspect me."

Grace sat down by the table, rested her elbows on it, with her chin in her hands, and looked across at her friend with an amused twinkle in her eyes.

"I suspect you, Gussie. I suspect that you have been reading too many sensational novels. Will you tell me in plain words what it is that you have discovered?"

"It's about Vincent St. John. Now do you know?"

Grace leaned back in her chair and sighed, but the sigh was one of relief, although Gussie did not so interpret it.

"What about poor Vin? Papa never liked him, and yet he is reasonably well-to-do, even rich, if he manages to keep his money, and harsh fathers are supposed to object to the penniless young man. Tell me all, Gussie; I have strength to bear it."

"Well, quite accidentally, you know, I overheard father and mother talking about your coming here, and of course I was interested. It seems your father is afraid you and Mr. St. John are becoming too much attached to each other, so he arranged for you to come here that you might forget him. But you won't, will you, Grace?"

" Did my father write to yours, then, on this subject? "

" I think it was my mother whom he talked with, the last time she was in New York, for she was warning father not to say anything jocular about young men when you were here, otherwise you might not forget. And then she told him about Vincent St. John."

" Poor papa! As I have no mother of my own, he is anxious about me, and takes counsel of other people's mothers. He would have greater peace of mind if he consulted with me, but he's so bashful he's afraid to begin a conversation on such delicate subjects as love and possible marriage."

" Who is bashful? Mr. Van Ness? "

" Yes, the dear man. He reminds me of a schoolboy."

" But surely, Grace, you are not going to desert the man you love, and who loves you, at the dictation of your father? "

" Ah, that's the novel again, Gussie. Papa would never dictate to me unless I became his typewriter, which is not likely. And who is more devoted to me than my own father? Why, he loves me better than his North Star express, and he keeps awake nights thinking of that. No, the dictation will be the other way about, Gussie. If ever things come to a crisis with me, I'll drive my dear papa into a corner where he can't escape, and then decisively patting my forefinger on my open palm, like this, I'll say, 'You must face the music, papa. Your only daughter is in love, and wishes to discuss the young man with you.' Then papa will become confused, will blush like a girl, will try to get away on a mythical engagement, will look everywhere in the room except at his daughter, and so at last we'll have a nice friendly talk about it, when he finds there is no way of avoiding it."

" But surely, Grace, you are not going to forget Vincent St. John."

Grace interlaced her fingers at the back of her neck, and dreamily studied the dim blue hills far beyond the St. Lawrence. Gussie gazed at her anxiously.

" I am sorry, Gussie, to fall so far short of your antici-

pations, but to tell the honest truth, I had completely forgotten him until you mentioned his name. The accident on the road must have had something to do with it—I began to forget him while walking along the margin of the lake toward the Junction."

CHAPTER VI

"I HAVE A BAG OF MONEY HERE THAT TROUBLES ME"

THE local train gave James Monro ample time for reflection before it ultimately landed him in Montreal, with a dilatoriness that borrowed something like an hour from its own deliberate time allowance. The subject of his meditation was chiefly his own stupidity, and his mind filled in the intervals, when this theme palled on him, by debating whether or not he should call on Miss Van Ness when he arrived at the northern city. She had asked him to call, and had even gone so far as to name the hour, but that was before she learned he did not intend to take advantage of the special train. Perhaps the young woman was justly offended at his boorishness, and would give him but a cold welcome if he attempted to proceed further with the acquaintance. And then, he reflected, there was but little use of a man in his position, with practically no money, lacking even a permanent situation, venturing to acquire friendship with a frivolous fashionable girl of New York, whose father was reputed to be a millionaire. Like other vanities of life, friendship with the rich costs money, and Jim had no money to spare. Pat Maguire might have seen a great opportunity here, and would doubtless have followed it with an enthusiasm all his own, but Jim, like all American young men, had a sublime faith that he would be rich one day through his own efforts, and this goal was so certain of attainment that the ways and means of reaching it troubled him but little, so that the idea of utilising a chance acquaintance in any way to further his own interests never even occurred to him. The self-confidence of an American youth with reference to his future career is something colossal. Nature, in permitting or arranging for this state of

mind, seems desirous of setting up a mental phenomenon that will bear some resemblance to the physical grandeur of Niagara or the Yosemite. The young man is not only positive he will speedily accumulate a fortune, but regards with equanimity the possible loss of it and looks forward with firm assurance to the making of a bigger one shortly after. He jauntily throws away chances that a citizen of a less favoured country would grasp with pathetic eagerness, as the emigrant, newly arrived, ignored the gold piece lying on the pavement, not wishing to bother about trifles, as he intended to fill his pockets when he came to the pile.

In the midst of his cogitations Jim thrust his hand against something unaccustomed and drew from his pocket a book bound in limp leather, which he viewed with perplexed brow for a moment, wondering how it came into his possession. It was Trautwine's treatise on surveying, and a glance at its title brought to his mind the strange creature who had given it to him, with the injunction that he should spend some odd moments studying it. He tried to do so, but civil engineering suggested the subject of the railway, which suggested the subject of the manager, which suggested the subject of the manager's daughter, whereupon the book closed of itself and slid back into the coat pocket. Trautwine, good mathematical man, probably never intended his dark cover to come into competition with a pair of hazel eyes, from which contest it has probably retired defeated many a time since then.

But, long as the journey was, Jim had not settled upon any particular course to pursue when the train rumbled into the window-checkered darkness of that long artificial tunnel called the Victoria bridge. He thought with a sigh that all engineers were alike, Trautwine no worse than his fellows, for here was a chance of an unexampled view of river, city and mountain; but Stephenson could do nothing better with his train than shut it up in a long box while it was crossing, thus treating the passengers to a season of blinking blindness.

Once arrived, the young man set himself to the finding

of a hotel that would not be so dear as to be ruinous, nor so cheap as to be unsafe. Having suited himself, he telegraphed his address to New York, adding that he had been delayed by a break-down of the train. This done, he found a tailor who seemed to be in a sufficiently fashionable way of business, and had himself measured for a suit of clothes, which was an outlay he had not counted upon when he left New York. He told himself that he had just remembered Montreal was a cheaper place in which to order clothes than New York, and so, with little regard to the revenue requirements of his own country, he resolved to take back some clothing with him. Yet his talk with the tailor showed an anxiety for style rather than for economy.

While the suit was being made he studied civil engineering on those occasions when his mind was not taken up with the problem whether he should call at the residence of Sir Murray Henderson or not. He passed that palatial mansion several times in his walks abroad, although his hotel was far from it, in the lower part of the town. Once or twice he heard the laughter of ladies from the lawn, but fence and hedge interfered with sight if they offered no barrier to sound, and the young man hurried on with the guilty feeling of one caught eavesdropping.

The route, however, took him past McGill College, and being so recently from a much less celebrated seat of learning, it occurred to him that he might do worse than explore the university grounds. As one thing leads to another, this visit resulted in his acquaintance with a young provincial land surveyor, who gave him some private lessons in the use of the theodolite, and elucidated a few of the problems that the solid Trautwine had presented in vain to his comprehension. The spoken word is a wonderful solvent where dry mathematics are concerned, and thus Jim felt that he was not wasting his time. There was no news from New York, and the mysterious stranger had not yet called for the sealed packet, which the young man kept securely in his inside pocket. At last, finding that it destroyed the contour of his

neatly fitting new coat, he did what he should have done when he arrived: lodged it in the hotel safe and took a receipt.

But not even the skill of the tailor sufficed to carry Jim up the gravelled drive that led to the front door of Sir Murray's residence. It was his card that enacted the well-known role of the last straw, breaking the back of his diffidence. The arrival of the cards marked a turning point in Jim's career, for although he had worn many a suit of clothes, he had never before possessed a card. The name "Mr. James Monro" took on a new and important significance when engraved on copper, and the result was all the most critical eye could desire in the symmetrical swell of the shading and the delicate tracery of the hair lines.

Luckily it was not until he rang at Sir Murray Henderson's door that a disquieting doubt regarding the proper use of visiting cards came upon him, and then it was too late to retreat. Should he give the card to the servant who answered the bell, or should he drop it into the basket, which he had usually seen on the hall racks in Stormboro houses? Or would the servant place it on the tray, or should he surreptitiously put it there when he was leaving? Unfortunately, Trautwine's Practical Surveying said nothing about all this.

He was further taken aback when the door was opened by a tall footman with powdered hair, a magnificent specimen of our race. To him he handed the bit of pasteboard, and asked for Miss Van Ness. He hoped the footman would know what to do with the card. Jim was not sure whether he wished that there should be many visitors or that Miss Van Ness should be alone. He was taken to a drawing-room, and Grace Van Ness came frankly forward to meet him, in a tea gown so regal that Jim for a moment could hardly believe this was the girl he met in a travelling dress and gossamer dust cloak somewhere in the wilds of Vermont. There were seated in the room a motherly-looking old lady with gray hair, and a girl somewhat younger than the radiant vision who now held out her hand to him.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Monro," she cried rather breathlessly and with heightening colour. "Have you been long in Montreal?"

"Only a few days," replied the young man, for he learned at once from her tone and accent that nothing was to be said of the briefness of their acquaintance or the circumstances in which it had been formed. His answer brought nim a quick, grateful look from the girl which thanked him for his alertness of mind, although it was scarcely flattering to him that this speedy comprehension was evidently unexpected.

"Mother, let me introduce to you a friend from New York. Mr. Monro, Lady Henderson; Miss Henderson."

And so there was Jim, marvelling at his own bravery, seated with the ladies while tea was brought in, the world apparently going on much as usual.

"When did you arrive?" asked Lady Henderson.

"On Thursday night of last week."

"Ah, then, you took the day train from New York. I think it a most picturesque ride through the mountains and by the rivers and lakes."

"Yes, madam, the scenery is certainly very beautiful."

"I don't like night travelling myself, although my husband will never travel in the daytime if he can help it. We are Jack Sprat and his wife as far as railway travel is concerned. Men seem to think it such a waste of time to be on a train unless they are asleep, and to accomplish three hundred miles while enjoying a good night's rest appears to a business man like filching just so much from existence that otherwise would be wasted."

"The invention of the sleeping car undoubtedly has lengthened the life of the business man," assented Jim.

"I'm not so sure that life is lengthened by all our modern improvements," continued the old lady. "By and by, if they keep on, I think they will abolish sleep altogether in this rushing, hurrying country. I never get much rest when travelling; I like my own home and my own room. With young people it is different. Grace—Miss Van Ness—here, slept serenely through a railway accident the other night and knew nothing of it until the morning. Tell Mr. Monro about your adventure, Grace."

"Indeed, mother, I'm tired of telling about it. I'll pour out the tea—I promised Mr. Monro tea if he called upon me here—and besides, you tell the story ever so much better than I do."

And with this Grace Van Ness devoted her attention to the tea, which the servant had brought silently in on a broad silver tray. Lady Henderson went placidly on with her gentle conversation, relating the incident of the palace car, an Adamless Eden, as she told of it, while Jim, with a craft hitherto unsuspected in himself, made various surprised comments as the tale continued, and caught once or twice a sly, amused glance from the heroine of the story as she bent over the teacups. Now and then Jim found himself wondering at his own self-composure during this very pleasant visit. How friendly and nice these quiet people were. How smoothly he had run along the groove in this social world, the entrance to which he had dreaded with such unnecessary fear.

Several people, mostly ladies, came in during his stay, and so he had an opportunity of a few words with Grace Van Ness before he left.

"I may not see you again in Montreal," she said to him, "unless you happen to be at the summit of the mountain to-morrow at eleven o'clock. Gussie and I are going to drive up there. Next day we leave for Quebec and the Saguenay. Have you ever been on the mountain?"

"Oh, I know the mountain well. I've been surveying it these last few days."

"Surveying it?"

"Yes. While waiting in Montreal for an indefinite time I've been taking lessons in civil engineering, and the mountain has been my stamping ground. Thus, you see, I am acquiring knowledge and enjoying scenery at the same time."

"You remind me of my father when he was a young man. He began his career as a civil engineer, running the line of a new railway. I shall not say good-bye to you now, as I may see you on the mountain top to-morrow."

Monro walked back to his hotel, upheld by a feeling of elation hardly to be accounted for by his successful

emergence from an alarming social encounter. It was nearly seven o'clock when he reached the hostelry, and there he found a surprise awaiting him, the surprise at that moment pacing impatiently up and down the hotel lobby.

" Why, Ben," he shouted, " where did you spring from? "

" Hallo, Jim! You are a fine faithful young man, I must say! Do you call this attending to duty? Here am I waiting for you, watching the clock hour by hour, while you are missing, and no one in the office knows what has become of you."

" I have been taking a lesson in civil engineering," said Jim, with more of awkwardness in his manner than the learning of this useful profession accounted for. " What are you doing here? "

" Doing? Well, it's lucky for you that some other fellow wasn't sent. I've to leave for Toronto to-night, and you must return to New York, so we've got to be a bit lively. Glassthrop & Co. have sent me for that ten thousand dollars you are concealing about your clothes, and I am to take it to Toronto. And, talking about clothes, what's come over you, Jim? Why this grandeur? Buttonhole bouquet and all. Well, I'm blowed! You civil-engineer in style out here."

Ben walked slowly round his friend, pretending to admire him from the various points of the compass.

" So you are getting five dollars a day, too, I imagine, with a payment in advance. Say, Jim, you are simply gorgeous."

" All right, Ben; suppose you stop fooling and give up attracting the attention of all in the hotel. Come to my room and practice your antics there."

" My antics! It's your clothes that's attracting attention. Well, as we've got to hurry, lead on to your room."

Once there Jim spoke.

" What do they mean by sending you here? Why couldn't they have telegraphed me to go to Toronto? "

" Give it up, Jim. I didn't ask any questions. Was glad enough to find they valued my services at five dollars

a day. Say, Jim, we seem to have struck it rich. Hope it will last, that's all, and so I advise you to adhere strictly to instructions and not pay too close attention to such outside matters as civil engineering. Glassthrop told me I should find you waiting at this tavern."

"Civil engineering is part of Glassthrop s instructions. However, you can have the money in five minutes. It's down in the safe. Where's your order?"

"Here you are."

Jim took the scrawl that was handed to him. It was written on a sheet with the letter head of the Broadway firm.

"Please deliver to bearer the sealed packet in your possession and return immediately to New York.

JAMES GLASSTHROP."

"Say, Ben, what's the matter with this man?"

"Nothing, as far as I can see, except that his means of locomotion are slightly defective. His brain seemed all right. Why do you ask?"

"Is this the only order he gave you?"

"Yes. Isn't it plain enough?"

"There is nothing here about ten thousand dollars."

"No. He told me that was the amount in the package. I suppose he did not mention it in writing, fearing I might lose the order, and that's why he didn't put in your Montreal address. Gave me that by word of mouth. He's a shrewd man."

Monro's brow wrinkled in perplexity as he scrutinised the paper.

"Time is flying, Jim," said McAllister.

"Well, you know, I don't understand those New York people. Glassthrop gave me a torn piece of paper, and told me to deliver the packet to the man who presented the other half. Did he give you the half of a torn sheet?"

"No. Said nothing about it."

"I can't give up the money on this. Obey orders, if you break owners. Ben, I believe they are playing with us. I don't like it."

"Let 'em play. If they're willing to fork over five good dollars every day to each of us for the fun of it, let 'em play, say I. Well, what are you going to do?"

"I shall telegraph Glassthrop and ask if he annuls former instructions. I wouldn't part with the packet to Mitchell himself without the other half of the document in my possession."

"But then you make me disobey my instructions. I was to leave for Toronto on the night train, while you have a written order to proceed to New York at once. It seems to me merely a choice of which command you will disobey; they're both from the same man."

"I can't help that. I'll do exactly what I was told to do. If anything wrong happens it isn't my fault."

"But your telegraphic order won't be any better than this one; in fact, it won't be as good, for this is written by his own hand."

"I won't ask a telegraphic order. He must send on the other half of my release slip, or I'll not give up the packet to any one."

"But that will keep us a day or more in Montreal, and may upset all his plans."

"I can't help that. That's Glassthrop's lookout."

Nothing Ben said could move Jim from this resolve, and they went together to a telegraph office, relinquishing all thought of trains for that night.

"He won't get the message until to-morrow," grumbled Ben, "and then I'll bet you'll get a red-hot answer over the wires."

"Nothing that he can telegraph will make me take that packet from the safe. He must send on that torn slip, and if he doesn't like that he can get some one else to be his messenger boy next time."

In the morning no telegram was likely to arrive before eleven, so after breakfasting together the two young men strolled along in the streets, Monro seeming a little nervous, as if the coming message cast its shadow before.

"I shouldn't worry about it, Jim," said Ben suddenly.

"Worry about what?" the other asked in surprise.

"About anything Glassthrop may say, for, after all, you acted just right."

"Oh, that. I had almost forgotten about it."

"Well, what's on your mind?"

"Nothing very much, but if I've got to leave Montreal so suddenly, I ought to let Palmer know."

"Who's Palmer?"

"A provincial land surveyor, as they call them here. He has been giving me instruction on the use of mathematical instruments. He'll be waiting for me on the mountain."

"All right; let's go and see him."

"I was thinking of doing that. You wouldn't mind waiting at the hotel in case a telegram should arrive. If it should come, open it and see what Glassthrop has to say for himself."

"My dear boy, I've nothing to do with the telegram; it's for you. Besides, we can't get out of this town until to-night anyhow, so it doesn't matter. I'll go with you. I'll leave you and Palmer together and climb to the top of the mountain. I want to see the view."

"Oh, the view doesn't amount to anything."

"Doesn't it? I should have thought it would be fine; city, river and country."

"It's rather disappointing, and the hill is very hard to climb. Besides, I would like one of us to be here when the telegram comes."

"Very well, Jim. I don't mind; I'll wait. You meet your surveyor, whatever his name is, and get back as soon as you can."

So Monro hurried to see his surveyor, as he had quite truthfully expressed a desire to do, and after an exceedingly brief conference proceeded to the top of the mountain to look once more upon that really amazing view which, so short a time before, he had professed to underrate, but which, nevertheless, is well worth crossing a continent to behold. He reached the summit about eleven, but it was nearly twelve before a carriage arrived, from which two young ladies descended and greeted him. Miss Henderson seemed surprised to find him there, and thought the chance meeting very lucky, for they were going away the next day. The conversation of three is

rarely worth recording, as the ancient adage intimates, and so it shall not be set down here. The three walked up and down while Gussie pointed out this place and that, naming villages in the country and prominent buildings in the town. When Jim escorted them to the waiting carriage, Gussie proffered the hospitalities of the vehicle, but he declined, giving the excuse that he had come out for a walk. He had come up the road and wished to descend by a more direct route, which appeared to indicate that it was the scenery he came out to enjoy after all.

He watched the carriage disappear, then turned to go down the hill, when a hand fell on his shoulder.

" A most charmingly nice girl, Jimmy. I would have come forward and begged an introduction, but I was afraid you might not like the intrusion of a poor relation."

" What are you doing up here? I thought you were to wait."

" All things come to him who waits, Jimmy, my boy, so the telegram came before I had waited ten minutes; then, knowing you would be anxious to read it as soon as possible, I climbed the mountain high, high, high, as the poem has it."

" How did you know I was here? "

" Oh, that was easy. You are an awkward liar, Jimmy."

" I didn't lie. I went to see the surveyor."

" Certainly. But you said this view wasn't worth seeing, which was a whopper, and your anxiety that I should not injure myself by climbing this knoll made me resolve at once to come up and see the girl. Who is she, Jimmy? "

" Did you bring the telegram? "

" Yes. What's her name? "

" Miss Augusta Henderson, daughter of a prominent Canadian railway man. Let me see what Glassthrop has to say for himself."

" I am more anxious to know what Monro has to say for himself. Which was Miss Henderson, the girl with the red hair or the blonde? "

" Ben, you're a fool. Her hair isn't red, it's bronze."

"What's her name?"

"How do you know it isn't Miss Henderson?"

"Because you were sure to mention first the girl you were not interested in."

"I'm interested in both of them."

"And also because you sprang so quickly to the defence of your colours, if I may call them so. Who is she, Jimmy?"

"The young lady with the bronze hair—you won't mind my insistence on that description as correct—is Miss Van Ness, of New York, with whom I chanced to become acquainted while approaching Montreal. Now, is your insatiable curiosity satisfied? I suppose I may again request a sight of my own telegram, unless you have more questions to ask."

"Lots of 'em, Jim, but this will do for the moment, and here's your telegram."

Monro read the message, which was not red hot, as McAllister had predicted. It ran:

"My mistake. Bring package to New York. Tell McAllister to come with you. GLASSTHROP."

"Say, Ben, what do you make of it all?"

"About the girls? Oh, that's easy. I saw at a glance—"

"Pardon me, Ben, I am serious. Are those people in New York crazy or what? There's nothing businesslike about their actions from first to last. They send me here with ten thousand dollars in a mysteriously sealed package, which is something no man would do unless he were engaged in underhand traffic that made the use of banks or express companies unavailable; then they send you with a bogus order for the money."

"Do you think there is ten thousand dollars in the bundle?"

"I am reasonably sure of it. Glassthrop made me count the bills, and I saw him place the money in the envelope and seal it. Of course, he might have done some sleight-of-hand jugglery, and there may be nothing of

value in the package, but that would be even sillier than the other."

The two young men were walking down the leafy path, a way rather steep for conversation, and it was some moments before McAllister replied. At last he said:

"I was thinking about it all the way up, and I've come to the conclusion that Glassthrop knows his way about. I doubt if there's a single dollar bill in that sealed wallet."

"I can open it and see."

"If you do, Jimmy, you'll deserve the name of fool that you so unjustly applied to me awhile since—one of the many unresented insults my good nature has stood from you. Let's go back a bit and reason this out. Reason is my strong point, you know. You will remember that our conversation with Mitchell turned on the question of honesty. I claimed that we were honest young men, and he rather sneered at the honest man; didn't believe he existed; placed small value on him if he did exist. Very well. Righteous indignation on my part, a cold, critical glance from you, which seemed to hint that my enthusiasm was carrying me away, and a shrewd studying of us both on the part of Mitchell. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly. Everything you say is quite right. Go on."

"Very well. Mitchell is the kind of worldy wise man who, if he wants a thing, pretends he doesn't want it. For some scheme or other the firm of Glassthrop is in need of one or two honest men, yet men who have their wits about them, and who will obey orders to the very letter against friend or foe. Mitchell writes to Glassthrop that he thinks he has hit on the men, but he leaves the responsibility of testing that point to his very brainy friend and chief."

"How do you know?"

"I don't know; I surmise. He warned us that he guaranteed nothing; we were to expect nothing; we went at our own risk."

"But he gave us the money."

"Yes, because we hadn't any, and so could not get through to New York; but he distinctly stated that the money was paid for service rendered, and not on account of salary. So far, so good. Mr. Glassthrop ostentatiously requests you to count ten thousand dollars in bills, and apparently he sends them with you to Canada—to Canada! Surely you see what that means. The moment you cross the boundary line that money is yours, if you like to take it. They can't bring you back—in fact, you need never have left New York. He has not a scrap of writing to show the money is his instead of yours."

"Rather an expensive way of testing a man's honesty, don't you think?"

"No. Because there isn't any real money in your envelope. He didn't need to risk a cent. You hand him that package, with the seals untouched, and Glassthrop will believe you are honest, up to ten thousand dollars at least. You tamper with the wax, and all your protestations would never convince him that you hadn't opened the parcel and found it worthless."

"By Jove, Ben, I believe you are right!"

"Of course I'm right. Then there comes in our cynical friend Mitchell's assertion that if a man's honest he is a fool. Glassthrop tests that, too. He sends me up here with this order which you refuse to honour. You practically say to him: 'My son, if you want to play the game, you must stick to the rules.' Then Mr. Glassthrop answers: 'Come back to New York, boys, and we'll call it square.' If you hand him that package tomorrow morning with the seals untouched we're in clover."

"Well, Ben, I've simply let you talk on without much interruption, but you've corroborated my own suspicions of the last few days."

"Now, Jimmy, come off! You can't steal my thunder in that barefaced way. You hadn't the remotest notion that we were being played till I told you."

"Up to a point I had, although I confess the bogus order business did not strike me in the way you put it. I thought they wanted you to take charge of the package for

a while, knowing there was alleged to be ten thousand dollars in it, and that Glassthrop had forgotten about the torn paper. But to show you that we think alike in this, you write down what you imagine we are to do when we get back to New York. I'll do the same, and we'll exchange papers."

Each took out notebook and pencil, and scribbled for a few moments, then each handed his book to the other. Jim had written:

"They will ask us to take part in some shady transaction, which on the surface will appear honest. We shall have to keep our mouths shut, and there will be a large sum of money at our disposal, which, nevertheless, we are not to draw upon, and somebody's going to get swindled by the time our job's done."

Ben's version was more terse:

"We shall have to tackle some enterprise in which they won't appear. This will involve the spending of money that they want to be sure we'll spend honestly, for, being engaged in some rascality, they have no redress if we default. They will pay us well, and if we do all that is expected of us will likely land ourselves in jail."

Both young men laughed, and Ben said:

"Well, Jimmy, we don't seem to have a very high opinion of our employers. However, I guess you saw farther through this affair than I gave you credit for."

CHAPTER VII

"MY SURVEYOR IS FALSE"

It was early in the morning when the two friends reached New York. They breakfasted at their leisure, for they knew they could not see Mr. Glassthrop at his office before ten. When shown into the gymnastic room they found Mr. Mitchell seated at one of the desks, assorting papers. The open satchel at his side, with various documents in bunches, held together by rubber bands, betokened the travelled man of the firm pausing in his flight.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," he said brusquely. 'Just in from somewhere?"

"Good-morning, Mr. Mitchell," returned Monro. 'Yes, we came from Montreal last night."

"I'm from the South, myself. If you want a desk, they've a key in the outer office for that one in the corner."

"Thanks, we don't want a desk. We are here merely to receive orders."

"All right. You'll excuse my going on with this work. I expect Glassthrop every moment."

Promptly at ten o'clock the outer door opened and Mr. Glassthrop was carried in and seated as usual on a chair; his man threw open the roller lid of his desk and retired.

"Ah, Mitchell, good morning. I take it from your telegram you put that through all right?"

"Yes, sir. Without a hitch; without a suspicion even —of a hitch," he added, as if in after thought."

"No money spent?"

"Not a cent."

"Well, that is marvellous. Mitchell, you are a champion. You deserve a monument. I'll put one up for you, John, and inscribe it in honour of the man who got a bill

through the legislature of an American state without bribing anybody."

Mitchell made no reply, but coughed significantly, as if warning his partner that they were not alone. Glassthrop, however, seemed a law unto himself. He paid no heed to the hint.

" Has the governor signed it? "

" Oh, yes. I wasn't going to leave till I had his signature."

" Then they can't go back on it in any way? "

" No way that I know of."

" What's the matter with beginning right at once, then? "

" I see no reason why we shouldn't."

" Well, young men, how did you find Canada? Didn't get your toes frozen, eh? I'd be safe from that, wouldn't I? You've brought back the money all safe."

" Yes, sir; here it is."

Glassthrop laughed as he took the packet.

" By jingo! I thought as I came up this morning that you'd refuse to give it to me unless I produced the other half of that sheet of paper. Hang me if I didn't. I telegraphed you that it was my mistake, but it wasn't really. The man who has the other half of your slip mistook his directions altogether and was waiting for you at Toronto, searching the hotels there. However, it is all right. I sent him the money in time."

As he rattled on he turned the packet over and over, keeping a keen eye on it; then, to carry out the farce to its extreme, he swung himself round the room on his aerial wheel, dropped down beside the safe, opened it and carefully placed the packet in one of its recesses, as if it were as valuable as it was alleged to be. Mitchell did not look up, but kept on at his assorting, unheeding the man whose body twice passed over his head in its flight.

" Did you bring back the book I gave you also? " asked the chief, once more returned to the polished deck of his desk.

" Yes, sir."

" Look into it at all? "

"Yes, sir."

"Find it tough reading?"

"No; I got along very well with it. I must admit, however, that, having nothing else to do in Montreal, I took lessons in civil engineering from a professional surveyor. That helped me a good deal with the book, and taught me the practical use of the instruments."

"Good man!" cried Glassthrop, bringing down his fist with a crash on the desk. "Do you hear that, John? He took lessons from a practical engineer."

"Excellent idea," said Mitchell, without looking up.

"Oh, you'll get along in this wicked world," continued Glassthrop. "Now, Mitchell, can you give us a minute or two? Where's that map of North Carolina?"

Mitchell rose, took a roll which stood against the wall in a corner, hung it up, thus displaying a gaudily coloured map of the state mentioned, the railways networking it in great black ones.

"Where's Pillageville?"

Mitchell pointed out the place.

"Just stick a brass-headed tack there, and another at the terminus."

Mitchell placed the two tacks in position and backed away from the map.

"Now, young men, these two tacks are fifty-one miles apart, although they don't look it. The lower one is on the main line of the F. A. & C. railway, and the other is on the West Central system. We propose to connect the two places with a single-track road. As these are competing organisations, at deadly feud with each other, inquisitive people will want to know where we are going to get our traffic, because one road won't give business that's going to feed the other, and the country through which our line will run is mostly uninhabited. If such inquisitive people should ask you where our freight is coming from, what will be your answer?"

"My answer would be that I don't know," said Monro promptly.

"Exactly. That's the right answer. I want to impress upon you that you don't know anything about the

Pillageville & Boontown branch; you don't know who's building it; you don't know anything about it. Do you understand that?"

"Perfectly."

"You are willing to keep your ears open and your mouths shut—both of you?"

"Yes, sir."

"They will perhaps attempt to bribe you. The curiosity of this world is deplorable. I am sending you there, expecting you to be offered more money than we pay you, to tell what you do know, and yet I am confident you won't take the money nor tell."

"I give you my word we won't," said Monro.

"And I also," added McAllister.

"That's all right. There will be placed in the First National Bank of Pillageville a certain sum of money which you can draw upon, both your signatures being necessary on each check. You will draw your own salaries each week at forty dollars a week—I raise you from the original five dollars a day—and you will draw for whatever expenses you are put to, buggy hire, men, etc., but I ask you not to inquire how much money is at your disposal, for that's one of the things I wish you to be able to say you don't know. Is that understood and agreed to?"

"Yes, sir; but what are we to do?"

"I'm coming to that. You'll go to Robinson, who runs the planing mill at Pillageville, with a letter I will give you for him. He will identify you at the bank, where you will register your signatures. Now, what you are to do is this. You are to run a line from one tack to the other, as straight as may be. You will begin at Robinson's planing mill and strike northwest for the Boontown Notch in the mountains, then through the Notch to Boontown. It wouldn't be a bad plan to walk or ride from Pillageville to Boontown before you begin your surveying, so that you can form some idea of the nature of the country. See what I mean?"

"Run a line? What sort of a line?"

"You are to make the preliminary survey for a

railway. You are to plant stakes a hundred feet apart or a thousand feet apart—I don't pretend to understand these particulars; what does Trautwine say the distance should be? Don't know? Well, it doesn't matter; you'll find out all about that. Anyhow, you will hire some cheap man with an axe who will make oak staves and drive 'em in for you. Perhaps two men with two axes, but get whatever help is necessary. Very well, you will work this telescope on the swivel and tell the men where to drive the stakes. Your friend here can hold upright the tall pole marked off in lengths and, as I understand it, you sight on that, making signs right and left with your hands, and then when the tall pole is in its exact position your man drives in a stake and numbers it with red chalk. It is an easy and pleasant occupation, and healthful, I should say. Didn't your civil engineer at Montreal post you up on this sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes, I understand that all right. Then I suppose I am to keep a note-book and mark out the levels? Am I to stake out the excavations and embankments, or only run the line of centre stakes?"

"Well, you can take rough notes of the difficulties to be met with in construction, the bridges to be built, the deep cuttings to be made, and that sort of thing, but at present we only need the one line of stakes. As I said, this is merely the first rough survey. When the construction survey is made, of course I shall have to employ thoroughly qualified engineers, who will get everything as accurate as a chronometer; but you understand my present object, although, as I intimated, I don't want it talked about. Civil engineers will cost me from ten dollars to twenty dollars a day, and for what I need just now you will do quite as well. I want to find out which is the shortest and least difficult and straightest line between the two places. I want to know whose land it will run over, and I want to be able to make a free and easy calculation as to the ultimate expense of building the road. When that is done the financiers step in, and we have then some basis on which to form calculations as to the capitalisation of the company we hope to organise.

I think there is no harm in taking these young men entirely into our confidence, eh, Mitchell?"

"None that I can see," replied Mitchell, "on the understanding that they do not talk to outsiders."

"Certainly, certainly. You've agreed to that, gentlemen, and we trust you completely. You can't be too careful of even a chance word—I've known many a big scheme wrecked through an incautious remark. You don't drink, of course?"

"Oh, no," said the two young men together.

"That's right. I've no use for a drinking man. Well, you understand we engage you simply because we want to get the work done as cheaply as possible, and because in the first instance absolute accuracy is not required. Now, if there's any question you want to ask, I'm ready to answer it."

"I think we have all the information we require. If any difficulty arises we can drop you a note."

"Yes, or telegraph. If it is important, jump on a train and come to New York, sending me a message that you are coming. Send me a report each week, giving a brief statement of how you are getting along, what money you have drawn, with an itemized account. That will keep us straight."

"How long do you expect this job to last?"

"That I can't tell. Depends a good deal on the difficulties you meet with. I don't know the country, but Mitchell does. What's your opinion, John?"

"It may take them well into the fall. A good deal depends on Boontown Notch; the rest of the route is comparatively easy."

"Might it not be advisable to begin at the Notch and work down to Pillageville?" suggested Monro. "Our work there would attract less notice than if we started at the town."

"No," said Glassthrop, decisively. "You will have to establish relations at the bank, and you will have to get your supplies anyway from Pillageville. No; begin at the planing mill, and strike out into the country. Any-

thing you want to do in New York? Can you leave to-night?"

"We can leave to-night."

"Good. You will find all the instruments you need right here. There's the theodolite in the corner; rod, chain and the rest are in the outer office. You may expect Mitchell to drop down on you at any time. He has a farm in the neighbourhood and boasts of the johnny-cake his negro cook makes. You might invite the boys to your log house, John."

"I shall be very pleased to have their company when I go to the ranch."

"There, you see, I've worked an invitation for you. Want any money to take you south?"

"Oh, no; we have plenty."

"I pay railway fares, you know. Don't forget to send in a bill for them. Well, good-bye. Better take the instruments with you and leave them at the depot, because this office will be shut before your train leaves to-night. Now, John, we'll go through those papers together."

The young men felt somehow that they had dropped suddenly and completely from the cognisance of Glassthrop, to whom Mitchell brought over his assorted documents. Monro took the telescope-mounted tripod from the corner, and with McAllister went to the outer office, leaving an unheeded "good-bye" behind them. Glassthrop and Mitchell were already absorbed in their papers.

CHAPTER VIII

"A RARE ENGINEER"

THE young men found Pillageville a scattered place, half town and half village, with the planing mill at the northern outskirts. Next day the proprietor of this factory, a tall, thin, silent man, who said he suffered from malaria, and looked it, introduced them to the manager of the bank. This official treated them with such courteous deference that his manner confirmed his clients in the belief that there was a large sum of money at their disposal, though, true to the promise given, neither made any effort to discover how much.

Hiring three saddle-horses, one for the guide they took with them, they left their belongings at the hotel and struck across the open country towards the low range of blue mountains, dim in the distance to the northwest.

The first part of their journey presented no engineering obstacles; it was an ideal land for railway building. After traversing the plain they entered a pine forest, then encountered more rugged uplands, and finally crossed the notch in the mountains, with a brawling stream, shallow in places, where tree trunks were balanced strangely on rocks as they had been left by the receding torrent of spring, looking sometimes like abandoned cannon. Boontown proved to be a sparse collection of rough frame and log houses clustered round a freight shed on a single track railway. There were a few sawmills, one owned by Robinson of the planing mill, to the foreman of which he gave them a note in case they needed assistance. Returning, they kept by the edge of the stream which flowed from the Notch, and it led them through the forest by a longer way than that by which they had come, until they were forced to abandon it in the open country, as its di-

rection did not make for Pillageville. Their guide rode on ahead, and they followed side by side.

"Well, Ben, what do you think of it all?"

"Oh, I don't know. A railway line seems fea ible enough, but, as Glassthrop said, I don't see where they are going to get their traffic, unless it is to be a logging and lumber road, which is possibly his idea."

"I can't get out of my head the unreality of the whole thing. Somehow, I distrust those people. Mitchell kept silent most of the time, except when Glassthrop appealed to him, and Glassthrop appeared to me to be talking glibly to persuade us to believe in a project which he himself didn't believe in."

"Why should he care whether we believed in it or not, and why should we care whether he believes in it or not, as long as he pays us what he promised and gives us a three or four months' job?"

"Oh, that's all right. I'm with him while the money holds, but it doesn't seem to me this is the way railroads are begun. I can't imagine shrewd practical men picking up two youngsters, entire strangers to them, and sending them down here to carry out a serious undertaking, for which these young men are admittedly unprepared. The real railroads of this country have not been engineered by men who never heard of Trautwine a week before they started operations. It has a fishy look to me."

"Well, what's your idea of it?"

"I don't exactly know. It's a big bluff of some kind. We're to keep our mouths shut, and to pose as real engineers, when we're not."

"Forty dollars a week, Jimmy. There's no bluff about that. What do you intend to do?"

"Oh, we'll go on, of course, just as if we weren't living in a fairy tale. We'll do the best we can for the money, and work hard."

"That's right. Now don't you think it would be a good plan to run our line straight from Pillageville to the nearest point on this river and then follow it up to the Notch?"

"No. You must remember I'm the civil engineer of

the company. I operate the theodolite; you merely carry the pole and look after the chain. The river either means a crooked line or an excess of cost in bridges. We'll have to take to the river through the focthills and the mountains, but we won't strike the stream till we're compelled to."

"By jingo, Jim! You're a good deal of an engineer already. That seems sensible, and I'm with you. We'll have to camp out, won't we, as soon as we get ten miles or so from the village?"

"I expect so."

"Say, Jim, before a week we two are going to believe in the Pillageville-Boontown branch as thoroughly as we do in the New York Central."

"Perhaps."

"Sure. I feel a certainty of it already. I can almost hear the toot of a construction train locomotive echoing among this tall timber. Say, we'll need a few axemen here."

"It will be some time before we get this far. Many things may happen before then."

"You never did have any faith, Jimmy; it's a great lack in your character."

"You have faith enough for any two—for a whole surveying party, in fact. Faith without works is dead, and I confess I don't see the works ahead as plainly as you do."

They had by this time come to the edge of the forest, following the turbulent river, some miles to the south of where they had entered the woods on their upward journey. Their guide had stopped and had turned half round in the saddle, his hand on the horse's haunches. "Say," he cried, as they came up with him, "see that big log house on the slope over thar? This is Mitchell's ranch we're on now, and that house is hisn. He's a no'then man, and pow'ful fond o' hosses. He's got a lot o' hosses on that ranch, with niggers to take care o' them mostly. He comes down from up no'th and breaks colts. They say he's a pow'ful rich man."

"Do you know him?"

"Suttinly. Know him? You bet! I've taken him out to this ranch more times than I could shake a stick at. They never know when he's comin'. He just telegraphs to the boss at the tavern to have some hosses ready for him, and he steps right off the train on to a hoss, and away he goes, an' I mos' generally takes out his trunks and guns and things in a light waggon. If you like to call there you're sho' gettin' somethin' good to eat—an' drink, too."

"We won't call. We don't know the people."

"That don't make no difference; 'sides, Mitchell's up no'th now."

The guide had evidently yearning recollections of the hospitality at Mitchell's ranch.

"I guess we can stand it till we get to the hotel. We'll have better appetites then."

The guide with visible reluctance moved on ahead again.

"If I were you, Jimmy, C. E., I'd run the line through Mitchell's ranch!"

"I won't, without definite instructions to do so; that is, unless the ranch happens to be in the direct line between the town and the Notch, and I judge it isn't."

"Glassthrop mentioned the place. Perhaps he intended that as a hint."

"Hints don't go with civil engineers. He must speak out if he expects me to pay attention."

The trip, which occupied several days, gave the young men a comprehensive knowledge of the country that was to be the scene of their operations, and their confidence in themselves grew as time went on. If Glassthrop expected the surveying to be begun without attracting much attention, he had little acquaintance with the Pillageville people. As a usual thing the populace congregated at the railway station to see the trains come in and depart, but now they adjourned with a unanimity that was embarrassing, to surround Jim in his first struggles with the theodolite. He said nothing unless a man got directly in his line of sight, and then Jim was compelled to ask him to step aside, which the man always good-na-

turedly did, but merely to give place to another consumed with curiosity. It seemed that nobody in the place had anything to do, except the hotel-keeper, and he sat tilted back on his veranda, his heels on the round of the cheap wooden chair, and his ancient straw hat pulled down over his eyes, in which unvarying attitude he received with equanimity the complaints of the guests regarding the inferiority of his tavern. Sometimes, but very seldom, he was goaded into a reply. He was a patient man; still, a guest now and then went too far in denunciation. "Worst tavern in the state?" he would drawl. "Oh, I dunno 'bout that. Ever stay to Bill Summers' place, Boontown? Didn't? Well, then, you dunno what you're talkin' 'bout. You go *there.*"

The crowd which surrounded Jim when he began operations at the planing mill filled him with uneasiness, for he feared some one among them might know how a theodolite should be used and thus detect his amateurishness in the manipulation of the instrument, but his fears were unfounded.

"Say, mister, what 'ud you charge for takin' a picture?" was the first inquiry made of him, which did not hint at any too accurate an idea of the functions of the machine. But another retrieved the reputation of the place by chiding the first, and asking if he did not see the man was mapping out town lots.

For the first day or two the young men had an appreciative group of onlookers about them, but after that they were left alone, because the general lassitude made it impossible for the natives to keep up an interest in any one thing for a longer period, and also because the surveying party were getting farther and farther away from Pillageville, and the energy of the citizens was not equal to following them. The editor of the local paper endeavoured to interview each of the newcomers regarding the project, but failed to get any definite information; nevertheless the next issue of the journal contained a glowing account of the new railway—a long-felt want, it said—and predicted that Pillageville would become the Chicago of the south, the great railway centre of the

Carolinas, a position to which its situation and the well-known industry and enterprise of its inhabitants fully entitled it. This interesting revelation was commented upon by the press of the state generally.

Monro sent a number of these extracts to Glassthrop, some giving marvellous figures relating to the capital of the northern company that was building the new road, and said in his report that he had given absolutely no details to anyone. Glassthrop's calm did not seem to be disturbed. He wrote that such guessing was only what he had anticipated; that some mention of the new road had appeared even in the railway columns of a few New York papers; that curiosity would soon die down, and that they were to continue their work unheeding.

This being good advice, and the young men having entered into their summer's task with energy and discretion, we cannot do better than follow the example of the citizens of Pillageville and leave them to it unmolested, being certain to hear from them if anything unexpected occurs.

BOOK III

BEGINNING THE GAME

CHAPTER I

"THIS MIGHT BE THE FATE OF A POLITICIAN"

PATRICK MAGUIRE looked over New York (supplementing his unwearying pedestrianism by occasional long-distance rides on street cars) very thoroughly, like a man who inspects a bit of property he has purchased, noting down in his mind the future possibilities of this section or that. Bearing some resemblance to his newly-arrived countryman who perused the constitution of the United States, he was mightily plazed wid it. He interviewed policemen, street-car conductors, saloon-keepers comprehensively and indiscriminately, and never went without desired information through lack of asking for it. Being hail-fellow-well-met, he always fell in with civil answers and much good humour. The thin silken line of his accent tied him at once to the attention of most of those whom he accosted, and when he encountered a brogue his own accent seemed insensibly to deepen, until often he was asked what county he came from, and had he been long out. There was something of the chameleon about Maguire—his hue corresponded largely with the colour that surrounded him.

Maguire found that he knew the city almost as well as if he had lived in it for years before. He was a great reader, who never opened a book. Newspapers were his literary food, and a man who depends on them gets a very fair and extensive knowledge of things as they are. He may not know much of things as they have been, but he

will be up to date, and the happenings in New York, political and criminal, if apparent tautology may be forgiven, occupies a large share even of the western press. Thus Maguire knew well who were the leading men of New York, although his list included no clergymen, statesmen, scientists or others whom some of us might have considered celebrated. In like manner he knew the different localities almost by instinct, in spite of his never having seen them before. Thus he paused at the City Hall and gazed with admiration at the Court House as the only building in the world worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars that had cost ten or more millions to complete.

"I think I'll drop in and see Bradley," he said to himself.

Herman J. Bradley occupied the comparatively humble office of deputy street commissioner, but like many another man he was valued for his possessions. He owned the mayor of New York, the governor of the state, the two senators at Washington, judges, boards too numerous to mention, and an army of officials like unto the sands of the sea in number. Not even the Czar of Russa wielded such despotic power as he did, and Charles I. had his head cut off for endeavouring to raise a tithe of the money Bradley and his gang annually looted from a single city. But it was his proud boast that the humblest citizen might walk in and hold converse with him, while he had been known to keep haughty millionaires waiting out in the cold.

After some inquiry Maguire reached the ante-room of the deputy street commissioner, whose business it was to keep the streets of New York dirty and the hands of his henchman apparently clean; but Patrick found that admittance to the presence was not so easy as the pleasant paragraphs in friendly newspapers had intimated. Various underlings, who looked like prize-fighters, and who held cigars uptilted in their mouths—a truculent position for a cigar—stopped him and desired to know what he wanted, but Patrick's unfailing tact and good nature mitigated the threats made by one or two to throw him out;

so that at last, partly by a fluke, and partly by a display of consummate cheek, he found himself standing before the flat desk of the deputy, who also had a cigar in his mouth, not held, however, at the altitude attained by certain other brands outside. To his amazement he found Bradley much easier to deal with than some of the smaller people he had encountered on his way thither.

The autocrat said very little and seemed to be a grim, serious man. He looked up at Maguire, silently, waiting for him to speak, and his penetrating eyes seemed turning inward as if to search his mind for any picture of the person who now stood before him. Not finding the image of the newcomer in his memory, they fastened themselves sternly, questioningly, on the daring young man, who cleared his throat and spoke.

"My name is Patrick Maguire. I think I have a turn for politics, and I'd like to try my hand at the game. So, Mr. Bradley, I came direct to headquarters."

The Boss puffed slowly at his cigar, still keeping his deep eyes on the young man, who, to his annoyance, began to feel abashed at the scrutiny.

"What precinct are you from?" asked a bystander sharply, who occupied a position at the end of the desk. "Why don't you go to the chief of your precinct?"

"I'm not from any precinct. I just came into New York this morning."

"How did you come? By Castle Garden?"

"Now, look here, my fine fellow," cried Maguire, his hot temper flaming up like a flash of powder, "I don't want none of your lip. I came to talk to Mr. Bradley, not to you."

"Oh, throw him out! He's no good. What the devil is he doing here?" shouted another, while the first said more calmly:

"Don't be so fresh, young man; you'll find you have to talk to me whether you want to or not. Haven't you made a mistake? Hadn't you better get out into Broadway and clear your brain a little?"

"Now, by God, I don't know but you're right. I think I'd better go out and begin shouting that Boss Bradley

is no such friend to the poor man that the lying papers says he is. 'T'row 'im out' is the best word a man gets in the deputy commissioner's office. A decent man has no right here, I find, and even the Boss daren't open his mouth. I've been misled by the press of the country."

"Oh, the papers are always lying about us," remarked a third jocularly.

And now for the first time Bradley spoke curtly, holding his lips away from his teeth-clinched cigar.

"What do you want?" he said.

"Well, you might do worse than put me in the place of this spalpeen here. Then you would have one polite man about you, which don't hurt at election times."

"Where are you from? What have you done?"

"I'm here straight from Michigan. I've just worked a little election there in elegant style, and I want to try my hand in New York, beginning in a small way, with a chance of promotion if I give good satisfaction."

"An election in Michigan is a different thing from an election in New York."

"That's just what I thought, Mr. Bradley, so I got in the real New York throw on them."

"Your side won, then?"

"They won up to the beginning of the voting, but I sold them out to the other chaps the day before, and made a few hundred dollars clear; and that's why I keep my hands in my pockets now, seeing the crowd that's round you."

There was a laugh at this from the insulted coterie, who pressed closer to the desk to be within sight and hearing of the most brazen applicant who had drifted in there for many a day. But Bradley seemed devoid of a sense of humour. He merely frowned and said:

"Where's Tom?"

The henchman mentioned came up to the front.

"Here, Mr. Bradley."

"Take this man down to Mike Rafferty's precinct and put him on the gang."

"All right, sir. Come along."

The ring round the Boss closed up and Maguire fol-

lowed his leader through the corridor, leaving the deputy street commissioner to resume his interrupted calling.

"I say, Tom," began Maguire, as they reached the outside, "what's the gang? What did he mean?"

"Well, if you ask me," replied Tom, "I should say it means ructions. But I don't know what it does mean, to tell the truth, so I'm going to keep my head shut about it. Don't ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies."

"Yes, but it won't hurt you, Tom, to tell me where I'm going."

"Oh, you needn't 'Tom' me, as if you were an old pal o' mine, for I've had nothing to do with it, and if you want to be as chummy to me as you pretend, you'll tell Mike that."

"Mike who?"

"Mike Rafferty."

"All right. I'll tell him anything."

They walked up Broadway and then toward the western front of the city by the street through which Maguire had penetrated New York that morning. Some men with shovels were dawdling on the thoroughfare, and one of these Tom accosted.

"Where's Mike? Do you know?"

"I donno. I hain't seen him for two days."

"He's likely in Doolan's saloon," said another.

"That's just round the corner," explained Tom to Maguire.

"Oh, I know the barkeeper there. He's an old friend o' mine," replied the latter.

"I thought you just came to New York to-day."

"So I did, but it don't take me half an hour to make an old friend. I'm not so slow as you New Yorkers."

If Tom meditated any reply, their arrival at the saloon prevented it. There were half a dozen men or more standing at the bar with glasses in various states of emptiness before them, and the talk was loud and general. A tall man, with florid face and silk hat well to the back of his head, seemed to be treating and doing most of the talking. The only really sober man in the place was the white-sleeved bartender. To the tall flushed man Tom

approached and begged a word in private with him, Maguire standing aloof.

"Spit it out, Tom," shouted the person addressed. "We've no secrets here among friends, have we, boys? What's going on at the City Hall?"

"Here's a man, Mr. Rafferty, that the Boss sent down to be put on the gang," said Tom in palpable fear, a fear that was speedily justified.

"What!" roared Rafferty, glaring at Maguire. "Did he say anything about the three good men whose names I gave him two weeks ago this very day?"

"He did not, Mr. Rafferty. He just said 'Take this man to Rafferty and put him on the gang.'"

Rafferty brought down his fist on the bar with a thud that made the glasses jump and jingle, swearing a mighty oath as he did so.

"He'll not move a shovel on any street in my precinct while my name's Mike Rafferty. Do ye hear that, ye flannel-mouthed son of a sucker, comin' here to take the bread out of honest men's mouths, and them as good voters as there's in the whole ward."

"Excuse me," said Maguire, with a suave politeness that entirely misled the angry man regarding the speaker's temper. "Excuse me, gentlemen, but do I understand that the 'gang' is the street-cleaning brigade I have often admired from the sidewalk this day as about the only persons in New York who have nothing at all to do?"

"Here, you get out o' this!" yelled Mike Rafferty. "Get your big feet off my precinct. What are ye doin' here, anyhow, you mug from the—"

Mr. Rafferty never finished his elegant sentence, for at this moment Maguire sprang forward like a released bull-dog and smote him a terrific blow on the mouth, which impact knocked Rafferty back against the bar, when a ringing left-hander on the right ear sent him like a log to the floor. There was instant commotion in the place, Tom wringing his hands in a safe corner, moaning:

"I knew it—I knew it!"

The bartender rushed to the doors and closed them, the drinkers making a motion of attack all together.

"Any friend of his object?" inquired Maguire in his most insinuating tone, falling back into a new position and rolling up his sleeves as he did so. The movement among the stricken man's friends resolved itself into a first-aid-to-the-injured effort, and they clustered sympathetically round the fallen hero.

"Call a policeman!" spluttered Rafferty. "See if Ryan's on his beat."

"No, no," pleaded the bartender. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, we'll all be in the papers to-morrow morning, if we're not careful. It's no fair play to strike a man like that without warning, and it'd serve you right to spend a night in the cells," he added angrily to Maguire, who stood ready for anything that might arrive.

"I'll have his life, by God! I'll have his life!" threatened Rafferty, staggering, with assistance, to his feet. "You'se all saw it! He shtruck me whin I wasn't lookin'."

"Then get up and look, and I'll do it again," said Maguire.

"I'll break your neck," cried Rafferty, wiping the blood off his chin with his hand, too excited to see the towel the bartender pressed upon him.

"Well, it's more than you could do a minute ago," growled Maguire.

"You shut up," commanded the exasperated bartender. "You've done enough harm now, without giving us any of your chin music."

"Me shut up, is it?" And Maguire's angered fist came down on the counter top with the force of a steam hammer. "Be the stars and stripes, Johnny, me pretty beer-slinger, but ye're smoothin' down the wrong man entoirely. There's not a squake left in Mike Rafferty, gutter groveller that he is. Let him open his yap at me again, an' his back's on the sawdust before he closes it. Give me the wink of an eye from any one of the lot of ye, an' it's out on the street ye all are, with Policeman Ryan on the top of ye. De ye hear that, now! I'll learn ye to insult a gintleman whin he comes t' ye as saft spoken as a three-months' lamb."

"It's all right; it's all right," pleaded the bartender, soothingly, quick as a weather bureau official to detect the position of the real storm centre.

"It's all right, is it? I say it's *not* all right. Did I begin it? Did I t'row out every insultin' word I could lay my tongue to? I did not. An' who sint me here? It was Boss Bradley himself. An' I wasn't sint here to take any o' Mike Rafferty's clack. Go and tell the Boss that ye called him a fool an' that I struck ye to the ground for it."

"I didn't say a word against the Boss," muttered Rafferty. "I don't blame the Boss. It's Grady that's done this."

"Indeed it was the Boss himself, Mr. Rafferty. Grady wasn't there at all, at all," put in Tom.

"If you're afraid to say a word agin the Boss," interrupted Maguire, calming down, "then I'll say it for you. He's no judge of men; he's a fool to send a man like me here, thinking I'm that hard up as to welcome a job of street cleaning. Put your three men on, Rafferty, good voters as they are, but you don't get me in the gang, although before next election I'll have a hundred voters at my back for every one of your three street swabbers."

"Don't you want a job then?" inquired the bartender in amazement. It was the first time he had known anything refused in New York.

"Want the job?" returned the indignant Maguire. "Do *you* want the job?"

"No. I'm in another profession," replied Doolan.

"Well, so am I. I'm no scavenger, I'd have you know."

"You see it's all right, Mr. Rafferty. The man doesn't want to go on the gang," reasoned the peace-making bartender to the sullen leader of the precinct.

"Then what the divil is he doing here?" inquired Rafferty from behind his towel.

"I'd a-told you that in a minute if ye'd a kept a civil tongue in your head," said Maguire.

"I'll make your head sore for that yet, me lad, if ye don't get out of this precinct."

"Yah. Threatened men live long. What'll you drink, boys?"

Tom edged up near the bar. The attitude of the others distinctly leaned toward the victor, with the exception of two, who still proffered sympathy, but took care not to give it any practical demonstration while the assailant was in his truculent mood. Even they wavered when the seductive invitation was sent forth. The bartender, much relieved at the clearing of the sudden storm, threw open the doors again and got into his place of usefulness.

"What will you have, gentlemen?" he asked, smiling.

"No friend of mine drinks with that man," said Rafferty.

"Oh, a drink is a drink," exclaimed one of the bystanders, who up to this moment had not spoken. "Come along, Mike, and join us, and let bygones be bygones. I'll apologise all round, myself, just to make things square."

"I didn't expect that from you, Ramsay, and ye'd better think twice before ye drink with an enemy of mine."

"As far's that's concerned, Mike, I choose my own company, and if you don't like it, you can lump it. I'm not seeking a job under you, any more than this young man appears to be."

"Then don't expect me to smooth out trouble with your men, that all."

"Oh, don't let that bother you, Mike. My men's as independent as I am, and that's what's the matter with them. I'm thinking you'll want my help next November more than I want yours now or any other time. So, if your tongue likes to make two enemies in an afternoon, all right, say I."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," gently urged the bartender, standing ready for orders. "Enough said; let it go at that. Come, Mike, have a drink with me."

"No, be gubs!" cried Maguire, tapping the bar with his knuckles. "This treat's mine, and whoever drinks drinks at my expense. The man who refuses can go somewhere else."

"That's the way to talk!" said Ramsay. "And when this glass is done I have the money to pay for the next."

The official street-cleaner departed with his two friends unmollified, and those who remained turned with a sigh of relief to the interrupted business of the day.

"Here's to you," saluted Ramsay, lifting his glass. "Mike will be sorry for this in the morning."

"Oh, he's a good fellow usually," put in the bartender; "and I dunno what's wrong with him to-day."

"Well, when a man beats his back against the sawdust as hard as Mike did, one doesn't need to wonder what's wrong with him. So you don't care to work with the gang, my son?"

"I do not."

"Why did you go to the Boss? What pull have you?"

"I haven't any pull at all. I'm going in for politics, and so I went to the chief to see if he could put me in the way of anything to do, never thinking he would insult me by setting me at cleaning streets."

"Now there's where you're wrong. It wasn't any insult, and wasn't meant to be. By gosh! that's how Tammany takes care of its own, and no wonder the opposition can't smash it. Here's a young fellow blows in against the Boss, without a single soul to say a word in his favour, and gets a job that the other men are pulling all the strings for. It's amazing, isn't it, Tom?"

"Yes, it is," replied Tom, who had kept well out of sight until Rafferty had disappeared; then sidled up to the bar with the others. "Yes, it is. I knew there'd be trouble. Didn't I tell you so?"

"You did," corroborated Maguire airily, "and didn't I back up your statement the moment I came in?"

"You did that," commented several others together.

Ramsay stood treat and then someone else proposed to do the same thing, but Ramsay said he had reached his limit and must go.

"By the way, what's your name, youngster?" he asked.

"Pat Maguire."

"Well, that's a good, handy workable name for this precinct; a darned sight better than Ramsay, if you're going in for politics. Better walk down the street with me a bit."

"I was to wait here for an old friend of mine that's wheelman on one of the ferries."

The bartender leaned over the counter and whispered something to Ramsay.

"Oh," cried the latter snapping his fingers, "I don't care that for Mike Rafferty. He can't hurt me because I don't want any favour from him. This is a free country. Besides, I am amazed that none of you men see further than the end of your noses. It was Boss Bradley sent this man here, and he cuts a bigger swath in New York than a dozen Mike Raffertys. You've overlooked that little point. It seems, as far as I can make out, that Maguire here is Bradley's man."

"He is that," emphatically chimed in Tom, who seemed to have a grovelling respect for the majority.

"You can see your wheelman another time, Maguire. Ferry-boats don't go up to Albany or over to Europe. Come along with me."

"I don't mind if I do. Tell the pilot I'll see him later, Doolan," added Maguire to the bartender.

CHAPTER II

"WE QUARREL IN PRINT"

ONCE out on the pavement, Ramsay threw an indicative thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the saloon they had just left, and remarked:

"You mustn't think I spend much of my time in there. I'm really a busy man, but I have to stand in with all sorts of people, although I don't take a great deal of interest in politics. Mike Rafferty is laying pipe for his election as alderman from this ward in November, and he came round for me with one or two of his hangers-on, and we all went to the saloon to save the country. I am manager of the New Amstel printing works, and we get a good deal of printing from both parties, so a man can't be too mighty particular what company he keeps. Political printing, tickets, handbills and that sort of thing is profitable, for they don't look too closely at the accounts, or kick at the prices, as is the case with commercial work. Do you know anything about printing?"

"Not a thing."

"Well, printers are a hard set of men to get along with, as a general rule. They're too blamed intelligent, for one thing. They read too much. Next to cigar-makers, who talk too much, they're the most difficult to deal with. The New Amstel is not a union office, and sometimes I think there would be less trouble if it were, but the boss—that's the owner, for I'm boss practically—won't have a union man in the place, if he can help it. There was a strike five years ago that cost him a lot of money, and the New Amstel's been out of the union ever since. That causes friction, for I guess I take on union hands in spite of myself; they talk among our men, and,

first thing I know, we are in trouble. Now, I'm an easy-going fellow myself and like to have things running smooth. I had an assistant that the men got down on, and last week he was taken to the hospital. He had no backbone and was afraid of the men, anyhow. You see, I use an assistant as a house uses a lightning-rod to take away the surplus electricity. I hire him to become unpopular instead of me, and sometimes there's too much electricity. Now why does a young man like you want to go in for politics? It's a disappointing, heart-breaking business at best, and you're sure to get thrown sooner or later. You'd make far more in the long run at some legitimate work."

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Ramsay, I'm a boy to talk. I've got the gift of gab, an' politics seems to me the only thing in this country that gives a chance to the man with a wagging tongue."

"Oh, I don't know. There's preaching and peddling, and—"

"I've just left the road. I was a pedlar, and there's too much footwork and not enough cash or glory about it, as the postman said."

"Now, look here. I want a man like you, who can soft-soap the boys with his tongue, and knock one down with his fist if occasion should require it. I can pay you good money, and it needn't interfere with your politics a bit. What do you say?"

"It isn't a bad idea; but I don't understand the printing business."

"I understand the printing business, and I'll tell you what to do. What I want you for is to take the blame generally. Then when the men complain to me I'll say I have a contract with you, which will be true, and they'll try to make things lively for you, so you won't stay. I expect you to stay."

"That would likely fall in with my own notion, for the throw-him-out game is one that two can play at, and rouses opposition. I'd be on the spot, anyhow, when they were doing the throwing."

Ramsay laughed.

"That's the kind of man I want," he said.

"But I'm not at all satisfied with my acquaintance with Mike Rafferty," remarked Maguire, changing the subject. "I'd like to see some more of that bully boy. What'd be the chance of my beating him for alderman of this ward? I'd like to help on the good government of this city, that the papers are always clamouring for."

"You mean, to get the Tammany nomination?"

"Yes."

"Not the slightest chance in the world. Rafferty'll have all the primaries fixed, and after that he's sure of election. They'll count him in anyhow, but they don't need to do any fraudulent counting in this district, as they might in an up-town one. Mike's a sure enough alderman, unless Tammany itself turns him down."

"Lots of things may happen between now and November."

"Sure. Still, you've no show. If anybody knocks Mike out it will be Grady."

"Could I capture the republican primary then?"

"Oh, easy. But what good would that do you? A republican, or even a decent democrat, has just as much chance in this ward as a ton of ice would have in the devil's kitchen. But, anyhow, November's a long way off, and you have to do something for a living, so why not have a try with me? I won't object to any quiet electioneering you like to do, after hours, on your own account. You'll be a resident of the ward, and in business in it, and so, can get acquainted with the voters, which is always something."

"All right, Mr. Ramsay, I don't mind if I do. I'll very likely catch on, if you don't expect too much at first. I'm a kind of jack of all trades by nature."

They had arrived at a four-story-and-a-basement brick building, exceedingly rectangular and unornamental, with many plain dirty windows. Up from the basement came the thrashing sound of numerous printing presses, and at the back was the intermittent steamless choo-choo of a gas-engine, the explosion seeming to miss a beat now and then, and trying to make up for it by two almost simultaneous puffs afterward.

They walked up steps into a dingy hall, then opened a door to the right that gave access to a large corner room, the walls of which were covered with posters of all sizes, printed in every colour under the sun.

Ramsay asked Maguire to take a chair for a moment, but the newcomer walked round the room studying the wall decorations like a tourist in a picture gallery. The manager drew up his swivel-chair to his large desk and plunged into the mass of letters and proofs which had accumulated during his brief absence, marking suggestions, instructions and eliminations with a blue pencil on various sized sheets of damp newly-printed paper, keeping the men who attended to him on the run, and clearing off his desk in a marvellously short space of time; a striking instance of intense application, perfect knowledge and quick decision. When the last messenger had gone he wheeled round in his chair, and speaking with a crispness that had been entirely lacking in his former conversation, he gave Maguire some curt information, to which the latter listened with more of comprehension than might have been expected from an amateur.

After their conference they went over the works together, Ramsay introducing his new assistant to the head of this department and that, all the men looking furtively and curiously at the stranger, who for once kept silence.

It was next day that the first symptom of coming trouble appeared. The foreman of the composing-room entered the manager's office with a bundle of proofs.

"Mr. Ramsay," he said, "this new man doesn't seem to know anything about printing."

"No? Well, Brown knew a good deal about printing, but he's in the hospital just the same."

"I'm sorry he got hurt. I hope you don't think the composing-room had a hand in it, Mr. Ramsay."

"Oh, I know they hadn't. Nobody in the works did a thing to him. They all told me that."

"The men thought, Mr. Ramsay, that when Brown left you'd perhaps promote some one inside to his place. I don't think they like a stranger coming in."

"I'm sorry for that. To tell the truth, you're all so

efficient in your own places that I don't care to disturb the present state of things. It's easier to get an assistant from the outside than to get a good man for any of the other departments."

"Yes. But still, don't you think, Mr. Ramsay, that an assistant ought to know something of the business? It's demoralising to men who are experts to have one over them who doesn't know an em quad from an ink-roller."

"I think you'll find Maguire will pick up knowledge pretty fast. What you say is true enough in works not as well organised as ours, but here, where, as you say, every man's an expert, I thought it wouldn't so much matter. Then you see, I've to look to the outside. Maguire's a good talker—"

"O, he *talks* enough."

"Precisely; so I thought after he had picked up a bit of knowledge he might go ou and drum for orders, when trade gets a bit slack. In these times of keen competition and cut prices a canvasser is all the better of knowing what he's talking about. Then he doesn't bring in orders that we lose money on."

"How soon do you expect to send him out, Mr. Ramsay?"

"That depends. Of course the whole thing is an experiment. Maguire may not do at all. I shouldn't like this to get to him, but I have serious doubts about his suitability. He seems to have the devil's own temper. Yesterday afternoon at the dropping of a hat he knocked Mike Rafferty into the middle of next week. It was just like that"—Ramsay smashed his hands together. "One saucy word from Rafferty, and biff, baff—Mike was on the floor before you could wink. Never saw anything like it outside a prize ring."

"I heard about that. Oh, he's the man, is he?" The foreman showed keen and newly awakened interest. "Didn't Mike hit back? He's a handy man with his fists."

"Hit back! He had all he could do to keep from swallowing his teeth. Mike was dazed, and I'll bet you his

head's ringing yet. Maguire was quite willing to take on everyone that was in the saloon, offering to put them all in the street, with the policeman on top of them. There were a dozen or more of Rafferty's heelers with him, and not one dared to raise a hand. Mike felt like a spring lamb that had been through a railway accident, and had enough of it. To tell the truth, I have my doubts about Maguire's being here very long, for he's no Job, and a man requires patience in the printing business."

But in this surmise the manager proved to be entirely wrong. Maguire not only picked up the tricks of the trade with amazing celerity, but became extremely popular with all the men.

He wrote long letters to a girl in Michigan, giving glowing accounts of his new position and the splendour and the lucrativeness of it, until in that district it was supposed that the young man had become a sort of syndicate for the editing of all the leading New York papers. There was even some truth in his letters, but the atoms were surrounded by such a halo of imagination that it might have been difficult to recognise them. He was picturing himself as he wished to be and as he intended to be, making thereby large drafts on the roseate future. Life would not be worth living were it not for its dreams, and dreams sometimes come true. Why should they not in his case, thought Patrick Maguire, as he wrote to the girl in Michigan, painting himself as he wished her to see him.

CHAPTER III

"BUT HE, SIR, HAD THE ELECTION"

WHEN Greek met Greek there came a tug of war in ancient times, but when politician meets politician in a primary, modern pugilism gets its chance.

Mike Rafferty was taken entirely unaware, for never before in that district had there been the slightest opposition to the Tammany slate. When the primary convened, one night in Doolan's saloon, the boss of the street-cleaning gang was as sure of his nomination to the office of alderman as he was that he would drink much beer to celebrate the event. The primary was supposed to give effect to the wish of a majority of voters who belonged to the democratic party in the hundredth ward, but the nominations had all been prepared long before; the slate was cut and dried, if such a phrase can be used regarding slates. The strife between Rafferty and Grady had been adjusted, Grady getting a political justiceship, and there was nothing to do now but go through the motions of a farce, carried out with that solemnity and decorum which are the true elements of humour in any farce. Maguire had no erroneous confidence that the path he had marked out for himself was an easy one. He knew the weapons of surprise and speed were his dependence. He kept well in the background, while the delegation from the printing works and elsewhere, enthusiastically solid for him, pressed into the suffocating, smoke-filled room. If they got their chairman elected, which might happen should the Rafferty men be caught napping, then they would nominate the entire Tammany ticket, with the single exception that the name Patrick Maguire would be substituted for the name of Michael Rafferty. Of course there would be a row, but once get the slate regularly

chosen and the meeting broken up, the chiefs of the city would have some qualms about reversing the action of a regularly constituted primary, even if they didn't get the alderman they wanted. They might drop Rafferty and give him something else, but in any case the heads would have to come to terms with Maguire or risk a local split in the party, which on many accounts was a thing to be avoided.

So the Maguire slate was also cut and dried, and the Maguire forces were under his own personal leadership, while Grady was to command the Rafferty cohorts so as to give the pleasant effect of a union of hearts before a critical public, for the Grady-Rafferty disagreement had occupied some space in the papers for a while past. It had been suggested that Rafferty should stay away, and afterward receive the nomination with that surprise which is so charmingly becoming when the office unexpectedly seeks the man; but whether it was that Mike was too seasoned a politician to allow his backers to act except under his own eye, or whether his distrust of Grady was not as much allayed as his own party papers said it was, Mike was present, although Grady was more prominently to the fore. Grady called the primary to order and asked it to be good enough to propose and to second a chairman.

"I nominate Mr. Day, foreman of the typesetters at the New Amstel works, well known to us all, to be chairman of this meeting," cried one.

"Second the motion," shouted several from different parts of the room.

Grady glanced at the paper he held in his hand and seemed puzzled, but Rafferty sprang instantly to his feet, and from that moment took the lead.

"Hold on! Hold on!" he cried. "Day's a black republican. This is a put-up job to overturn the wishes of the people."

"You're a liar! Day's as good a democrat as you are, and better. We're not the street-cleaning gang!"

"I move Bob Moriarty."

"Second it! Second it!"

"All in favour of Mr. Moriarty, a Tammany man in good standing," cried Rafferty.

"He won't have good sitting in that chair. You can't elect him! Demand the ayes and nays!" (Great confusion) as the papers say in brackets.

"I declare Robert Moriarty elected chairman of this meeting. Mr. Moriarty, take the chair."

The Moriartyites were in a visible minority, and this decision was fraudulent, rankly fraudulent; nevertheless Moriarty, a determined-looking man, came forward, while messengers, receiving whispered instructions from Rafferty, squeezed through the seething crowd to the door and ran for help. It was Rafferty's game to fight for time, and the chairman began to read something that could not be heard in the uproar. His elocution, however, was speedily cut short, for the powerful Maguire shouldered himself forward from his retirement and flung the astonished chairman among the crowd.

"Fair play! Fair play!" roared Maguire. "All in favour of Moriarty hold up the right hand."

The Rafferty party disdained to vote; they saw the hour for fighting had arrived.

"Contrary—Moriarty's defeated! John Day takes the chair!"

But Day didn't. It was now a free-for-all combat. Maguire did Trojan's work trying to get in a blow at Rafferty, but Pat was knocked flat with a section of broken chair. He forced his way to the surface again, tattered and bleeding, roaring like a maddened bull. If all his followers had been as powerful and combative as himself he might have won the day, but the resources of politics were not yet exhausted, and Maguire became aware, like a man in a nightmare, that a new element had intervened. The blue-coated police had taken a hand in. They were laying about them with their batons, and the clubs were not hitting the heads of the Rafferty men. The game was up, and Maguire knew it.

"Break away!" he shouted.

"Seize that man!" yelled Rafferty, pointing to Maguire. "He's the leader. He tried to break up a peaceable, law-abiding meeting."

The police clove their way toward Maguire, who wrenched the baton away from the foremost of the force, and struck the revolver from the hand of that officer when he drew it. The big window had been smashed, and Maguire, watching his opportunity, sprang through the opening, bringing a fresh clatter of glass with him, and so away down the street, eluding his pursuers, and reaching his own room uncaptured.

Law and order being re-established in the wrecked saloon, Moriarty took the chair (what was left of it) and the Tammany ticket was nominated in its entirety.

"Disgraceful attempt to break up a peaceable primary," said the democratic papers. "Foul methods of republican roughs foiled by the police." "Another bloody row at a democratic meeting," said republican papers. "Tammany crushes free speech with policemen's clubs."

You paid your pennies and took your choice of the lies.

Maguire found it necessary to go off to the country for a few days. "You leave it all to us," said foreman John Day, "and lie low. We'll see you through, by nominating you on the republican ticket, and after that, they won't dare touch you, or everyone will say that they are doing it because you are an opposition candidate."

And so it was. Maguire got a telegram in his place of retirement up in the lofty and now nearly deserted Catskills that a most peaceable republican primary had been held, the city republican ticket adopted, with the name of Patrick Maguire set down for alderman of the hundredth ward. Maguire and his backers knew there would be no keen competition for the nomination of alderman on the republican ticket in that ward, for such a candidate was merely put up to be knocked down in November.

The police had inquired at his boarding house for Maguire, and also at the printing-office. No one knew where he was. Ramsay spoke soothingly to the force.

"I've got rid of that young man," he said. "Politics

and business don't mix, so I told him I could have nothing more to do with him."

Nevertheless, the Tammany committee promptly took the democratic printing away from the New Amstel firm, which was a blow against its prosperity. Ramsay himself went to see them about it, but the chairman said bluntly that they took care of their friends, and that the whole opposition of the primary had been traced to the New Amstel works.

"I believe that is true," said Ramsay, "but it was all on account of Maguire, and I've discharged him. Between ourselves, I've always voted the straight democratic ticket, and so, I think, have most of the men. But we take care of our friends, too, and if we have all the republican printing and none of the democratic, well, you're going to lose some votes in this precinct."

"We can spare them," said Grady.

"True, you can spare them in the precinct, and in the ward, but you need all you can get in the city and the state."

"Oh, the city's all right."

"Well, it's hard to punish us because one of our men happens to turn out an obstreperous politician, especially as I sacked him the minute I found it out."

"We take care of our friends," reiterated Grady.

"Then you want us to be your enemies. I tell you what it is, Mr. Grady, when this gets out, Rafferty will be certain of what he has strong suspicions already, which is that you want to knife him quietly if you get a chance."

"Rafferty knows better than that."

"Indeed he doesn't, and when you turn down a factory having more than two hundred and fifty voters in it I confess it looks to me as if there was something in his distrust."

"It's Rafferty himself that insisted the printing should be taken away from you. I don't care who does the work. See Rafferty, and if he's willing to give you the printing I am."

At that moment Rafferty came in, and nodded sullenly to the manager. Relations between the two men had been strained since the knock-down in the saloon.

"How are you, Mr. Rafferty? I've just dropped in to see the committee on the printing. It's like this, Mr. Rafferty. I'm not responsible for Maguire, and I bounced him as soon as I heard of his ruction at the primary. I haven't seen him since."

"You knew the kind of man he was before you hired him."

"Well, you see, I wanted someone who could control the men, and he did control them, but not in the way I expected. If he came back and applied for his old job again, and I refused, there would be a riot in the works when the men found it out."

"It's too late now. The printing's given to Simson Brothers."

"Heavens and earth! Rafferty, Simson Brothers can't handle it. They have neither the machinery nor the men; they're paper-bag makers. They can't do banner work on the one hand, nor ticket work on the other, and get it out on time. I know what election printing is. There will be last moment changes, and then you will be flying round for God's sake, and it will be an all-night session in the press-room, with every available man and machine."

"Simson Brothers take the risk of that."

"Pardon me, Mr. Rafferty, *you* take the risk, and a mighty big risk, too. Suppose you have no tickets on the morning of the seventh, what good are they going to do you on the morning of the eighth?"

"There's plenty of other places to get printing done in New York besides either yours or Simsons'."

"Now, Rafferty, that remark shows how little you know about the printing trade. There will be a rush in every office in town. You'll get plenty of printing done the day after, but not when you must have it. Now, we've always delivered orders promptly to the minute, and you know I won't say a word about the fact that we've over two hundred and fifty voters in the works."

"Oh, you can't threaten me, Mr. Ramsay. I'll be elected in spite of you and your men, and when I'm alderman it will be a sorry day for you, the day you turned against me."

"I don't threaten, and I'm not against you. It's you who are doing the threatening."

"We'll let you have the printing next year."

"There's no election next year."

"Well, that's the best I can do for you."

With this Ramsay had to be contented, and when he went away Rafferty said to Grady:

"Learn him a lesson, blast him! Some of these jays need taking down a bit."

"They do that," corroborated the chairman. After all, it was none of his affair if Rafferty caused dissatisfaction in this voting precinct, and the ticket was sure to win in any case. The hundredth was a ward certain of a pure election; to attempt fraud was unnecessary on the part of the democrats, and useless on the part of the republicans. When Ramsay reached his office he sent a messenger to the republican candidate for alderman. Maguire came speedily in answer to the summons, and when he entered, the manager locked the door.

"Well, Pat," he began, "you can come on here again as soon as you like."

"Then you didn't get the printing?"

"Not a scrap of it. Rafferty himself refused it."

"War to the knife, eh?"

"And the knife to the hilt."

"Who's going to print the tickets?"

"Simson Brothers."

"I know some of the fellows there."

"It's too risky, Pat, my boy. If you expect to beat Rafferty by monkeying with the tickets, I tell you straight you have not the ghost of a show. They're up tc all these dodges themselves. You can't teach your grandmother to suck eggs."

"Look here, Ramsay, the ease of the trick lies in the very safety of this district. People that are cock-sure are careless."

"I shouldn't count too much on that, if I were you. The work at the primary put them on their guard, and Rafferty's a suspicious man, anyhow."

"All I want is a chance at the tickets the night before election."

"It's a mighty risky business, Pat, and I'm not sure but Sing Sing is at the end of it if you're found out."

"I'll take my chance on that. I wonder if it would be any good, my trying to get on at Simsons'?"

"Oh, no; that would be too bald. They'll be keeping their eye on you, and even if Simsons engaged you, which is not likely, some of the men would give you away. No, I'll tell you a better scheme than that. Simsons can't do either fine or fast printing. They depend on getting it done elsewhere. I know Jerry Simson, who is his own manager. We've got a lot of coarse printing on hand which might as well be done outside as here, and better. I'll go over and see Jerry. I'll tell him that if he can oblige us by taking on this work for us just now, I'll drop anything and help him out in some future pinch. He'll give us the printing of the tickets sure, for he has no facilities for doing them. Now suppose we have them, what's your plan? Do you propose to print in the name of Patrick Maguire instead of Mike Rafferty after proofs are passed, and trust the committee not to notice? I tell you it won't work. It's sure to be spotted."

"Now, Ramsay, there isn't any man in the world I'd give myself away to except you, for I don't believe in too much talking, although I do such a lot of it. Voting is light in the forenoon; then's when the respectable element does its franchise act, hoping there won't be a dirty crowd. At the noon hour the workmen come in, and most of the trades are going to shut down at one o'clock for the day, so the hands will get a chance at the ballot-box. I'll send the first batch of tickets to Simsons' the night before, and they'll send them on that evening to the committee rooms, where they'll be examined, and first lot will be all right. We'll guarantee Simsons and they'll guarantee the committee that the tickets will be in Grady's hands before he needs them. Rafferty will be out working, and he will have examined the first instalment. On the next lot I'll paste over Rafferty's name my own slip: 'For alderman, Patrick Maguire.' I'll not do that on the top tickets, nor on all the rest, but on every second or third one, de ye see? down through the middle

of the bunch. Then we'll just have to risk it. They may find it out before it's too late, and they may not. If they don't, then I'm elected alderman for the one-hundredth ward."

"I wonder how many years a man gets for that, Patrick?"

"I dunno, but if it succeeds it will be worth a term as the old woman said."

"What a frightfully dishonest man you are, Pat, if you'll excuse me offering an opinion."

"It's not dishonest at all. I had a clear majority at the primary, but they broke our heads and threw us out. The nomination was mine, but they robbed me of it, and nothing could be done. I don't kick; I go them one better if I can, and the way I tell you is the only way I can think of to get an honest man into the city hall. The nomination was mine by rights, and if it hadn't been stolen from me wouldn't I have been elected sure?"

"Certain."

"Well, then, what are ye talkin' about dishonesty for?"

"Pat, I'm no politician, as you are well aware. I'll not register nor vote this election. I'm out of all this."

"I don't want you to lift a hand."

"No, but I'll lift a foot. I'll go on tramp, and it strikes me that November would be a lovely time for an excursion. I'm off on a little vacation to the south on the first of November; I need a rest, and I'll be back any time between the twentieth and the end of the month. I'll leave you in charge."

"You couldn't do better, Ramsay, and I hope you'll have a good time."

Maguire at least did everything he could to command success, whether he deserved it or not. He had the tickets printed on exceptionally thick sheets, and his own slips done on exceptionally thin but opaque paper, and of exactly the same tint as the ticket itself. He took no one into his confidence, but worked alone all night in the manager's office. When the slight moisture required in superimposing his own name over that of Rafferty's dried, he ran all the doctored tickets between heavy

rollers, and it required a keen eye to detect those that were decorated from those that were plain. As a matter of fact the fraud was not even suspected until election night, when the counting of the tickets was progressing, and it was found to the amazement of the enumerators that Rafferty had been running appallingly behind the rest of the ticket, on account of the heavy "scratching." Even then it was not supposed that actual illegality had been committed, for despite his being up all night in the manager's room, manufacturing bogus tickets, Maguire was running about from polling-place to polling-place during election day, peddling his slips, and by his good-natured manner and glib talk was actually succeeding in getting many to accept his "pasters," for, as he told them, with more truth than his hearers imagined at the time, their friendly action would have no real bearing on the result.

"Of course," he said nonchalantly, "no republican has any chance in this ward, and next time I hope to be on the democratic ticket myself; but to do that, I want to have as small a majority against me as possible; so, if ye give me a bit of a hand in a pinch, I'm not the man to forget it."

Grady saw that if Maguire had two or three helpers as good as himself at canvassing and flattering and appealing to the sympathies of the electorate, he *would run* Rafferty hard, so he passed on the word that there was to be no "splitting" for sympathy. "Vote the straight ticket," was the cry, but Rafferty himself had no fear, and could not help snubbing Grady for his anxiety, which was a tactical mistake.

The splitting necessitated slow counting, and it was toward midnight before it became evident that Rafferty was hopelessly defeated, although the rest of the ticket was overwhelmingly elected. Strangely enough, not for one moment did Rafferty suspect the real cause of his discomfiture, but with ungovernable temper jumped at a totally wrong conclusion, and began to pour truculent abuse upon a person who, whatever his past record, had loyally adhered to a bargain made. A deal had been concluded; a trade; Rafferty had

been sold by his friends; Grady was the traitor, and his very warning of that afternoon proved his guilt to Mike and his friends. He would have Grady drummed out of the party. He would fight him to a finish then and there. Grady said nothing, for he did not know what to say. He suspected fraud of some kind, but there had been no chance for Maguire to stuff in bogus ballots, as the ballot-boxes had been too tightly in the grip of Tammany for any but themselves to do that. Rafferty's violence was estranging even his best friends, and Grady was advised to retire quietly; Mike would think better of it in the morning, they said. As chairman of the committee he went back to the committee rooms, the altercation having taken place in the rear room of one of the saloons where counting was going on. Pondering over the unexpected result, knowing that the ballot-box was prolific of surprises, although generally its action could be foretold with reasonable certainty in New York, he took from a drawer the surplus ticktes of the day, examining them, like a man shuffling cards, for in groping after an explanation of the outcome his mind, by intuition, turned toward some tampering with the tickets, rather than toward any change in the expressed will of the people. Rafferty's mind would have acted in precisely similar manner had it not been for his deep distrust of Grady. Suddenly the shuffler paused in his shuffling and gazed at the words before him, " For alderman, Patrick Maguire," on an unused ticket. A slight smile parted the scrutiniser's lips, and an expression of admiration and appreciation came into his keen eyes. He put the ticket inside, and went rapidly over the papers in the packet, every now and then throwing out one of the slips. When he had thus assorted the white and black sheep into separate herds, he rescanned the white sheep with vigilance, to make sure he had missed none of the black. The decorated tickets he put carefully into his inside pocket.

The returns from the whole city were now coming into the committee room, and were eminently satisfactory to the democratic party, with the single exception of the

slump for the republican alderman in the hundredth ward. The committee room was filling up rapidly, and a man was setting forth the results in large figures on the end wall. There was a steady roar of conversation, mostly excited. One of the leaders came in and was greeted with a cheer. He moved through the crowd, nodding here, shaking hands there, until he reached the spot where the chairman stood.

"Hello, Grady, you've given us a little surprise in the old one-hundredth to-night. It's the talk of the town, so I thought I'd come down and hear the disgusting particulars. How do you account for it?"

"Oh, it's easy enough to account for. This Maguire is a very popular young man. He's a sort of sub-manager in the New Amstel printing works, and the men there are all solid for him. That gave him a good start, for there must be three hundred voters there, that otherwise Rafferty would have got. Then he worked, tooth and nail, from the opening to the closing of the polls—never let up for a minute. I warned Rafferty in the afternoon the way things were going, but he wouldn't pay any attention. You see this Maguire came within an ace of getting the democratic nomination in the first place. You remember the row at the primary?"

"Yes. You were chairman, weren't you?"

"I was there in charge till they elected their own chairman. Maguire was in the real majority; there's no doubt about that, but we downed him, and there was the devil's own row. We'd have been cleaned out if it wasn't for the police. Well, a lot of the voters think Maguire did not get a fair show, and neither did he. That accounts for another part. Then, of course, I don't like to say anything against Rafferty, for he's abused me like a thief to-night; I don't mind that; every one knows I did my best; still, he acts with others the same way, and offends people right and left. There's Ramsay, for instance, an awfully decent fellow; always voted straight; well, Rafferty took the printing away from Ramsay's firm, just because Maguire worked for him, although Ramsay, right in this room, said he'd discharged Ma-

guire. Ramsay dropped a good broad hint about the voters in his employ, but Rafferty wouldn't listen to reason, and now Ramsay's gone off on a vacation. His men see he takes no interest in the thing, so it's vote as you please in that establishment."

"Rafferty's a mug," said the leader. "When he's down, we'd better let him stay down. What sort of a fellow is this Maguire?"

"Well, I've seen him fight at a primary and work at an election, and it's my opinion that he's a man to be reckoned with. If Maguire got hold of the republican organisation, he'd make the fur fly."

"Say, couldn't you have a quiet talk with him? He can't be too nasty particular in his opinions or he wouldn't try to grab the democratic nomination and then secure the republican nomination all within a week."

"I guess he's all right. I'll see him if you say so, but if my visit comes to the ears of Rafferty he'll swear it's another proof of my treachery."

"Damn Rafferty. Don't let that bother you. We must have Maguire on our side before the republicans get hold of him. I suppose they haven't helped him much in this contest?"

"Not a bit, as far as I could see. He helped himself."

The leader and Grady went out together. The committee room was becoming rather noisy, a good three-quarters of those present being well on the road towards drunkenness. The two parted at the street corner, and Grady went to the nearest telegraph office to send off some messages. The first man he saw there was Maguire busily writing a telegram. Grady stood near him and incidentally cast an eye over the dispatch the young man was inditing. Much may be learned by casual glances in politics. The message was innocent enough, and, on the surface, truthful. It was addressed to a Mr. Byfield in Michigan, and it read:

"Patrick Maguire was to-day elected alderman of the city of New York by a big majority, on the republican ticket."

"That'll please 'em," he muttered. "They're all republicans in that district."

When Maguire had filed his despatch, he turned, and came face to face with the chairman of the opposition committee.

"Allow me to congratulate you on your surprising victory."

"Oh, it isn't the first time I've beaten Mike Rafferty," said Pat, with easy nonchalance.

"So I hear. My name's Grady, as perhaps you know."

"Oh, yes, I know. You knocked me out in the primary. I remember you well enough."

"All's fair in love, war and politics, you know, Mr. Maguire."

"Bless you, I ain't kicking—not to-night. If you hadn't knocked me out, though, there'd be one more democratic alderman in New York this evening than there is."

"I believe you. I'd like to have a word or two with you in private. Would you mind coming up to my rooms? They're not far from here, and I've something to drink there."

"It's a little late, and I've had a hard day's work. How would to-morrow do?"

"Oh, of course. It is a little tough on a man working all day and being up all night the night before."

"The night before?" echoed Maguire taken aback, "I don't understand?"

"Oh, yes, you do. Come on."

"You'll have to excuse me, Mr. Grady, for I'm going home."

"You've a lot more sense than that, alderman. I've got to talk with somebody about the winning ticket, and it might be better that I should talk with you than complain to the authorities."

"I dunno what you're driving at?"

"I can't very well explain here. This is one of the winning tickets. Do you recognise it?"

Grady took from his pocket a pasted ballot-paper, and handed it to the new alderman. Maguire looked at it for a moment.

"Who's up in your rooms?" he asked.

"I'm all alone. There'll be nobody there but me, and I've all the rest of the counterfeit tickets in my pocket."

"All right. I'll go with you."

"Good. I'll make no attempt to murder you, or kidnap you."

"I'm not afraid."

Grady's flat proved to be a most comfortable suite of apartments. The room into which he brought Maguire was luxuriously furnished, and although already well heated by steam, its owner struck a match and applied it to a coal fire laid on, thus adding a cheerful blaze to the illumination of the lamps. Maguire threw himself into an easy chair, which the politician wheeled round for him in front of the open fire, to enjoy the warmth after the chilliness of the air outside. "What will you have, beer, whisky, brandy or wine?" asked Grady.

"I don't care at all," replied Maguire, suppressing a yawn. "I'll take whatever you take."

"I guess a sandwich or two wouldn't do us any harm. I can't remember whether I've had lunch or dinner to-day or not, but my appetite seems to think I haven't. Anyhow, I'll forage and see what I have in the shanty."

Grady set out some bottles and glasses on the table, then he disappeared for a time and returned with a tray load of provisions. "Thank heaven, I've found some oysters. Will you have them raw, or shall I cook them?"

There being no answer he looked round at Maguire. His legs were stretched out and his chin was sunk on his breast. It needed no second glance for his host to see that the young man was in a sound sleep. Grady, a cynical smile on his lips, stood on the hearth-rug a few moments regarding him: "That's what it is to have a clear conscience," he murmured to himself; then aloud he cried: "Hello, alderman! Wake up and vote. Don't you want anything to eat?"

Patrick pulled himself together with a deep sigh.

"Have I been asleep?" he asked, blinking; then, with a burst of confidence, as if his host were his oldest and dearest friend, instead of a man who had threatened him with prosecution a few minutes before, he added: "Say, Grady, old man, I'm done right out."

"I see you are," said the hardened politician, his heart warming toward his guest. "Here's a cocktail I can recommend to put new life into you. Then draw up a chair and have some grub; after that I've got a room here for you. You're not going home at this hour in the morning."

"Lord, I'd be satisfied to lie right down on the floor. Say, that touches the spot, doesn't it? Oh, by the way, you wanted to talk to me, didn't you? Well, now's your chance, before I drop off asleep again. Fire away."

"Well, it was only about sort of working together, you know. The republican party is no good in this town. You've elected yourself for once, but you can't do it again on the republican ticket."

"I don't want to. I went up last summer to see the Boss, but he had no use for me. I guess he'll listen now, and give me a show. I'm going to drop in and see him in a day or two."

"Haven't you any fear your election will be overturned?"

"Lord, no! Who should overturn it? Not the republicans, for I'm elected on their ticket. Not the democrats, for I'm ready for a deal. It's as straight as a string, Grady; I knew it would be all right if you didn't tumble to the racket before the polls closed, and so had time to stuff the boxes and count me out. It's too late to do anything now."

Grady laughed.

"You've got some pretty red-hot ideas about the way elections are carried on in New York. We don't stuff ballot-boxes nowadays."

"I did."

Again Grady laughed. There was an original frankness about the villainy of his new acquaintance that was refreshing.

"How did you get at the tickets?"

"Bless you, I printed 'em; that's why the paper's so thick, so the pasting wouldn't show. Ramsay told you Simson couldn't do the tickets."

"Did he? I'd forgotten."

"Was there many of the wrong ones left?"

"Not very many; here's the bunch."

Grady drew the packet from his pocket and threw it on the table. Maguire examined them with thoughtful interest.

"No wonder Rafferty got a dose, if that's all that's left over. Sure you didn't overlook any in the committee room, Grady?"

"Quite sure."

"Then, let's call it square," said Maguire, with a grin, as he tossed the accumulation of tickets on the open fire, where they burst into a blaze that had almost the effect of an explosion.

Grady made no effort to recover his evidence, but leaned back in his chair and roared.

"I say, Maguire, you're a cool hand for a youngster. You'll either land in the state's chair as governor, or in the state's prison as convict. You forget that some of our canvassers have bunches of these tickets in their pockets, and that any one of them may stumble on the slips."

"Not much chance of that, Grady. A ticket's only waste paper when the poll's closed. No, where the real danger lies is in this. An examination of the ballot-box would show which I had pasted and which had been pasted by my friends. I had to do it pretty slick, so that you folks that were handling the tickets wouldn't catch on. I sort of supercalendered the bogus tickets, as we say in the trade. I knew there was danger in my peddling the tickets, for there was bound to be a difference between the genuine pasters and the green goods your men were shoving into the box, but I had to hustle round, so's to account for the scratching when the count came on. I tell you, a man has to look sixteen ways for Sunday on election day. But if it was all to be done over again I'd risk beating Rafferty on the straight legitimate. Gi' me two weeks before election, and I'd snow him under."

"I guess you're about right. When I run for mayor of New York I'd like you to manage the campaign."

"I'll do it, Grady, and land you there with the biggest majority ever counted."

"Then I may take it, you're going to work with us?"

"You bet! I intended that from the first."

"That's all right. There's no more to be said. Now I'd like to give a little supper up here some night and introduce you to Bradley and a few of the leaders, on the quiet, you know. Of course, to outsiders, you're a republican. Any objection?"

"Certainly not. Delighted."

"Enough said. I see you want to get to bed, so come along, and I'll show you your room."

CHAPTER IV

"SACK GREAT ROME WITH ROMANS"

THE little dinner which Mr. Grady gave in honour of Patrick Maguire was a great success from whatever point it may be viewed. The table was spread in the dining-room of Grady's flat, for in that apartment talk could be more free than at even the most exclusive restaurant or hotel; besides there were many newspaper men prowling about the town seeking what innocent politician they might devour, and it was perhaps, as well to keep from their knowledge the fact that the chiefs of the democratic party were drinking, in prime champagne, the health of the latest elected republican alderman. Grady graced the head of the table, with Maguire at his right hand and the Boss of New York himself on his left. Down the table were half a dozen of the men who ruled the huge city. The choice eatables were sent in from a neighbouring restaurant which was famous, and they might have been prepared in the next room, so perfect was the service. The small party was deftly waited upon by Grady's own man, an English butler, one who knew his business thoroughly; a person of illimitable silence, with a prophetic instinct which led him to anticipate the wants of a guest when the desire was only half formulated in the guest's mind. The imperturbability of his clean-shaven face was never disturbed, and the funniest stories were told in his presence with no more effect on his impassive countenance than if they had been related to the Sphinx. The slightest glance from his master was translated into the required action by the man, with an accuracy which might scarcely have been expected to follow verbal instructions. Grady was justly proud of this servant. The new world was redressing the injus-

tice of the old; the Saxon was the humble servitor of the proud Celt.

The Boss talked little and drank sparingly, but none of the other guests, except Maguire, followed this temperate example. They talked more and more excitedly as the meal went on, and sometimes seemed to trench on affairs which cooler men would have discussed in secret, on which occasions the Boss seemed uneasy, and, although he never said anything, he cast a glance now and then at the chairman, if the host might be so called, and Grady, with ready wit, drew a red herring across the trail of injudicious controversy. He recognised that it was not well to let Maguire too deeply into the secrets of the conclave, until they knew more of his intentions, and until he was more thoroughly one of them. However, Maguire did not appear to understand what was said, and gave no signs of his customary alertness of mind.

When the meal was finished, cigars lit and the coterie left to themselves by the impassive servitor who waited on them, the Boss had some talk across the table with Maguire, Grady throwing in a quiet word now and then.

"You've started well, Mr. Maguire," remarked the Boss.

"I can't say that I did, Mr. Bradley," replied Patrick affably. "You seemed to think all I was fit for was to go on the street-cleaning gang, and when I thried for to show that I might be of use at a democratic primary, me friend Grady here threw me out."

"It was Rafferty did that," submitted Grady; "but you had your revenge on him at the polls."

"I had that. By the mighty will of the people, I turned the rascal out, as the saying goes," and Maguire winked at Grady.

"I never thought much of Rafferty," continued the Boss; "he depends more on his mouth than on his brains. But now that Rafferty's out of it, would you like to have charge of the street-cleaning gang yourself?"

"I was just complaining that I had been sent there once too often before."

"Oh, yes," put in Grady; "but it's a different thing

going there as head of the precinct to going there and handling a shovel."

"Oh, true enough; but I'm a different man from what called on the Boss at the time I speak of. Then I was Pat Maguire of Nowhere-at-all; now I'm Mr. Maguire, alderman of the city of New York."

"What is it you want?" inquired the Boss gravely.

"I want something general, not local, Mr. Bradlev. I want something that will take me all over the city. It's an interesting town, and I would like to study it. If there's a little salary belonging to the place, just enough for a quiet man to live on and give a dinner like this now and then to his friends, why, I'm not the boy to make any kick against that."

"You see, Mr. Maguire, our difficulty is this: all the large offices are filled, and, indeed, so are the small ones as well. You've downed Mike Rafferty, and so I thought it was only fair that you should have his job. There could be no row on that score. But to put some well-known man out of a place and put you in, you see yourself there would be trouble, especially as you are such a newcomer, without any particular following."

"I had particular following enough to elect me alderman of the hundredth ward." As Maguire said this he looked keenly at the Boss. The latter, however, showed no sign of being aware that the following was a mythical one, so Grady had evidently not said anything of his post-election discovery. As Maguire glanced at his host there was a slight smile on Grady's lips, and a slight lowering of the eyelid.

"I think," said Grady quietly, "there is not much use in discussing followings. The better plan would be for Mr. Maguire to say what would suit him; then we could see what might be done."

"You want me to help you out?" cried Maguire. "I'll do that with pleasure, as the old woman said. I would like to be made inspector of fire-escapes."

"There's no such office," replied the Boss.

"That's just the beauty of me proposal. There's nobody to be thrown out or offended. I'm not shoving any-

body to the wall. Let the office be invinted, for there is a law recomindin' fire-escapes—"

"Which no one pays any attention to," interrupted Grady.

"All the more reason for the appointment of an inspector."

"I'm afraid the papers would jump on us for providing unnecessary places for our men," demurred the Boss.

"On the strict contrary, Mr. Bradley. You can do this thing with a flourish that will bring even the opposition to your side. Let me write out your announcement, and I'll bring tears to the eyes of New York be the talk I'll give them about the saving of life and limb, and the care ye're taking of the poor creatures that live in these tall buildings. Then we'll run in some guff about the non-partisanship of such an important place, and ye'll appoint the republican alderman to it. If that doesn't melt the heart of the New York Try-bune, I dunno what'll do it. The minute you appoint me to the office I'll resign the aldermanship, an' ye can elect who ye please. It's all as straight as a string, and don't ye forget it."

"How about the salary? We're just in on a platform of strict economy, if you remember."

"I had forgotten, an' I don't know that anyone else in the city of New York remembers it but yerself, Mr. Bradley, which shows what an iligent memory ye have. Well, economy's our strong point. Make the place a thousand dollars a year, say, an' let it go at that."

"You can't live in New York on a thousand dollars a year, Maguire," warned Grady.

"Oh, yes, ye can, under an economical administration. Retrinchment and reform, and that sort of thing. I've lived on less, Mr. Grady."

"Well, if you're satisfied, I think that's a mighty good way out. What do you say, Mr. Bradley?"

"We'll make it two thousand at least, otherwise the papers will say that we gave it to the republicans because it was not worth any Tammany man's having it. We will look on that as settled, Mr. Maguire."

And then with a sigh of relief the Boss of New York

rose to his feet. He had found the new man not only moderate in his desires, which was an uncommon characteristic of applicants, but possessing a fertile resourceful mind as well, showing a way out yet offending nobody; a most desirable consummation in politics. The rising of Mr. Bradley broke up the dinner-party, although some of the guests showed an inclination to stay and do further justice to the liquors of their host. At last Grady and Maguire were left alone together, for the latter was again to spend the night in the flat.

Grady poked up the fire and sat down in an easy chair, opposite his guest.

"Now, thank goodness," he said, "we can take a drink without being afraid our tongues will run away with us. Maguire, I must confess I don't understand you. To-night was your opportunity. The Boss expected to be looted and was prepared to agree to almost any demand you might make on him, yet you ask a beggarly thousand a year, and he's so astonished that he gives you two thousand, doubling your call, a thing I never knew him to do in his life before."

"Grady, you're a good fellow, and unless I'm a Dutchman, an' my accent would hardly lead ye to believe that same, you an' me'll be in many a stiff fight before we die."

"Not against each other, I hope."

"I hope not, and I think not. I have seen to-night the men that rule this big city, an' there's only one of the lot I admire a little bit."

"Bradley is a good man and knows enough to keep his mouth shut, which some of the others don't."

"Bradley may be all you say. I think him a dull man myself; but the one I admired was you. You steered them out of a tight place a dozen times. Your manner said, 'Don't be too free before this boy, for he's not one of us yet, and it doesn't do to be loose with the gab.'"

"Oh, I didn't distrust you at all, Maguire. It was nothing to me what they said. In fact, if there was any suspicion floating about it was on your part, for a remark you made to the Boss was plainly to find out if I

had told him anything about how you were elected alderman."

"It's dead right you are, and I found out that you were a brick, who knew when to keep still. Now, Grady, do you know what I think of that lot, Boss and all?"

"You mean what do they think of you? Those men can make or break you."

"Indeed, and it doesn't trouble me a particle what they think of me. An' as for breaking me, I'm just the boy would like to see them try their hands at it. I think they're as brainless a lot as you could pick up from Castle Garden, where most of them landed, to Central Park, fornenst which most of them are living now. That's what I think."

"Oh, I dunno. They can pick up the money, anyhow."

"They can. But in what way, Grady? Tell me that."

"Oh, there's plenty of pickings to be had round the city hall."

"Yes. Pickings through falsifying accounts, selling contracts, taking bribes and that sort of thing, leaving evidence enough behind to convict a moonlighter before a Kerry jury. Some fine day a lad with a head for figures will get among the records, and these boys that think themselves so safe will be in Sing Sing before they know it."

"Don't be too sure of that, Maguire. I have seen a few trials myself, and there was no closing of a jail door after."

"My dear Grady," cried Maguire, rising and walking up and down the room, "these people don't understand the first principles of the American constitution. They don't know what this great country is made for. The foundation stone is liberty. The ordinary every-day man in the street wants liberty to make money; as much of the cash as he can, and as fast as he can. If ye give him that, he asks no odds of anybody. He doesn't want to bother too much about politics, or about anything else, except the raking of the boodle. Therefore we officials relieve him of all trouble, providing he votes straight, and keeps our side in, so that we can do his political work for him,

in order that he may devote his whole attention to the piling up of his wealth. He ought to be a grateful beast to us for our care of him, but sometimes he is not, and this makes politics an uncertain game. Very well, now; what these jays of yours has not tumbled to is that the business man of New York will pay good money to be let alone. There's a gold mine in that idea. It should really be patented, but I would have a difficulty in preventing infringemints, so I tell it to you instead, and you and me will work the racket and say nothing at all about it. Are ye game for that, Grady?"

"I'm not sure that I understand what you are driving at."

"It's as simple as falling off a log, as the old woman said. You and me have offices, that make us guardians of some law or other, it doesn't much matter which, as long as it's a law that commands people to do something that's expensive to do, and that they won't do if ye let 'em alone."

"Such as putting up fire-escapes on a big building," suggested Grady, with a smile.

"Exactly, an' a mighty good instance. Very well, now, the inspector, as the faithful guardian of the people's safety, serves notice on the owner of some big building that he is not complying with the law, and that he must put up fire-escapes."

"All right. The proprietor, being a law-abiding citizen, puts them up. What then? Where does the inspector come in?"

"Oh, the inspector stays in all the time. When the building is beautifully decorated with fire-escapes, at a large expense, I doubt if they will meet the inspector's approval, and I much misjudge him if he can find it in his conscience to pass the work, all on account of the welfare of the people. The material is sure to be defective, or certain windows are unprotected, and this must be pulled down, and the other must be put up differently. I tell ye, me boy, that's the very time the inspector nobly earns his salary, and if the proprietor kicks, the papers will say he's a flinty-hearted millionaire, anxious to build up his

pile at the expense of the lives of the poor. Well, it won't be long before the owner of that building takes a tumble to himself, and comes up to the captain's office to settle. He will have a quiet talk with the incorruptible inspector all alone, and that worthy man will expound the law to him. Then perhaps when he leaves he will neglect to take with him a few hundred dollars that he has carelessly mislaid on the inspector's table, and after that everything runs as smooth as sweet oil. Of course, this is an extreme case, Grady, explained in full. because ye suggested it, but as a general rule the business man can be so trained that he will come to the inspector's office before he throws away good money in endeavouring to comply with a law that he does not rightly understand."

"Yes. I think myself there's money in the scheme."

"To be sure there is, with no records left behind you, no checks handled or any dangerous documents of that sort. In Michigan, when I was there, a man gave me two or three hundred dollars for simply doing nothing. 'Keep out of this contest,' he says, 'and the money is yours.' I kept out of it, and sure enough the money was mine. This was in a small and poor community of farmers; just you figure up what this same idea will come to in a rich city like New York, with thousands of people making tons of money, and only wanting to be left alone in peace and quietness to make tons more. You see, by taking office and devoting our lives to the service of the people, we have no chance of making our ton of gold, like the other fellows, and it's nothing but fair and honest that the money should be supplied in some other way. Ye don't bother the poor man a bit, but we take from the superfluity of the rich, which is the true element of democracy and republicanism combined."

"It's the honesty of the plan that commends it to me, Maguire," said Grady, smiling again.

"Of course it is," continued Maguire, quite seriously. "Honesty has been my policy ever since I was a boy, and though I may have lost money by it, what is money compared with a clear conscience and the right of looking every man straight in the eyes. I could not sleep of

nights if I was like them fellows that were here awhile ago, knowing there was evidence against me if anyone chanced to happen on it. I tell you, Grady, I am an unselfish man, as you can see, because I share this scheme with you. If you want to know what I'm working for, here is a letter that will show you. Read it."

Maguire took a folded document from his inside pocket and handed it to his host. The latter read part, then looked up at the young man, whose face was aglow and whose eyes were sparkling, a smile of peculiar sweetness hovering about his lips.

"You've made a mistake in the letter, Maguire," said Grady. "This is private."

"Of course it is, but read it to the end."

"You've handed me a letter from a lady."

"Yes, yes; that's right. From Miss Lottie Byfield, and a lady she is, as you say, true for ye."

The brazen cheek of the hardened politician reddened as he read this beautiful love letter, touching in its simplicity, tender as an opening rosebud, modest and unsophisticated as a violet in spring. It breathed throughout a supreme confidence in her lover; in his honesty and truth, in his ultimate success. When he had read to the end, Grady folded it up with a sigh and handed it back to its radiant owner. "So you are to be married on Christmas day, Pat?"

"Yes, and to the dearest, loveliest girl, thousands of miles too good for a man like me."

"They are all too good for us, Maguire."

"Well, Lottie is, and no mistake. I don't know so much about the rest of them. Yes, I'm to be married Christmas day, Grady, and I want to do the thing in style, for she's more than worth it. I'm going to take her down to Florida; we'll go through by Cincinnati and Atlanta, and then after a month there we'll come straight up to New York. Now the trouble with me is that I haven't got any money worth speaking of. I want to borrow a thousand dollars. Will ye let me have it?"

"I will. But the journey you propose to take is an expensive one, if you do it as it ought to be done. Then

you'll want to give her a nice present, so you'd better make it two thousand while you're about it."

Maguire held out his hand, which the other took, and Patrick pulled him to his feet.

"Grady," he cried, slapping him on the shoulder, "you're a brick, and I swear you won't lose by it."

The progress of Alderman Patrick Maguire to the west was a triumph. There was a glamour about his personality that made him attractive to the newspaper man in the cities through which he passed, and he could be depended on for a breezy column and a half interview regarding politics or almost any other subject you liked to name. Pat was always one of the boys, wherever he found himself, and he received a reporter graciously, even effusively. He had provided himself with a huge fur overcoat which gave massive proportions to his naturally stalwart frame. Then he was the youngest alderman the city of New York had ever elected; he had won in a Tammany stronghold on the republican ticket, and that in itself was distinction enough for any man. The Detroit newspapers hailed him with delight, and devoted much valuable space to him, for added to his general fame was the fact, locally interesting, that he had come to take back a Michigan girl as his wife. And he acted his part well; there was a swagger about him that would have done justice to the highest position in the land. The swagger of a well-dressed, well set up man, of more than ordinary proportions, in a great fur overcoat, palpably expensive, is a most imposing thing to behold, and shows us what we all may come to if luck stands our friend.

Thus it was that when Maguire got off the train at Ypsilanti even the president himself could hardly have had a more enthusiastic reception, or a more numerous gathering to welcome him.

The snow had been falling at intervals for some weeks before Christmas, and the sleighing was excellent.

Maguire had telegraphed royally from Detroit to the leading livery stable man in Ypsilanti asking that the best team and the finest sleigh, with robes to match, should be in readiness for him, but the hospitality of

Michigan refused to allow such a project to be carried to completion. Young Sam Byfield had brought to the station as fine and fresh a pair of four-year-olds as the state could show, and he was accompanied by several of the neighbour boys, each with his own span. They said that if any livery team in Ypsilanti thought it could pass them, it was at liberty to try, offering money on the contest; but the man who let out horses for hire declined the bet, much to the hilarity and the scoffing of the young bloods from the country. And so they captured Maguire as soon as he stepped down from the train, though they were somewhat abashed, it must be confessed, by his magnificence, and with their captive they dashed over the frozen roads of Michigan. Maguire, however, put on no airs; he was a countryman himself, he proclaimed, and pointed out to them that the men who really succeeded in the cities were the boys who came from the farms, as he had done.

And so, with great glee and song, they drove toward the settlement of which the Byfield homestead was a part.

As they dashed down into the hollow before reaching the farm, Maguire noticed a long white ridge of snow running straight through the valley. Excavation of some sort had been stopped by the winter, and now the snow covered all traces of the work, but left the prolonged white hillock, like a great drift.

"Hello," cried Maguire. "What's that? Are they building a railroad through these parts? My! You'll be in town then, won't you?"

"That ain't no railroad," replied Sam, "it's the ditch you tried to get people to vote against when you were here last. They've been a-working at it most of the summer and all the fall. A Ypsilanti man's got the contract. I guess you knew more about 'lectioneering in New York than you did that time in Michigan."

"Yes, I learned something when I was here among ye before. I couldn't play tricks with you people in this neighbourhood, but New York was dead easy, for a young man from the country, you know."

It was admitted on all hands that the wedding on Christmas day was one of the most notable functions that had ever taken place in that part of Michigan. Reporters from the city were present, and what greater compliment could be paid to a ceremony than that? Their rhapsodies on the beauty of the bride and the manly bearing of the groom may still be read in the old files of the newspapers at the office of those journals or in the public library, and so, being already on record, it is not necessary here to repeat them.

Mr. and Mrs. Maguire began their wedding journey to the south amid the God-speeds of all who knew them.

BOOK IV

THE HILL OF ENDEAVOUR

CHAPTER I

"THAT WERE A TRICK INDEED"

THE summer burned itself out, and the cooler days of autumn followed, but still Monro and McAllister had not arrived at the termination of their work. The progress became slower when they reached the forest growth of the foot-hills, for until a theodolite is invented which will enable a man to see through a tree-trunk, a path must be cleared for it.

The young men kept at their task with persistence, answering no questions, and consequently telling no lies. After local curiosity regarding their undertaking had died down, they were subjected to a scrutiny that was evidently directed from afar; but this, too, their silence baffled, and the inquisitiveness of the outlander expired as had that of the local want-to-know. They had become suspicious of all strangers, and must have seemed to all strangers very glum sort of persons indeed.

When they got into the forest the weather was delightful, and now that they were constantly by the side of the babbling river, its musical chorus lulled them asleep at night, and sang to them a morning hymn on their awakening. The work was manly and healthful, and their way of living was perhaps the way Providence intended man to live. They were attended by two axemen, and a negro did their cooking in a manner which seemed to them to excel Delmonico, not that either of them had experience of that famous eating shop. There were three white tents

which moved a little up the green glade each day. Given perfect weather, a campfire is ever the most enchanting of hearths. Now and then a stray belated newspaper floated into the forest, when one or other of the campers returned from Pillageville with supplies, but as a general thing they knew little of what was going on in the outside world, and cared less.

Only once had Mitchell visited them, and then briefly. He departed as suddenly as he came. Monro endeavoured to show him the advantages of the line they had adopted, as compared with other routes which might have been chosen, but Mitchell's inscrutable, clean-shaven face gave no token that he was interested, or the reverse. The negro cook, who seemed to know by instinct everything that was going on in the state, said that Mr. Mitchell had entertained a party from up north at his roomy log house on the ranch; but if he had done so he failed to invite the young men to participate in his hospitality, as Glassthrop had given them reason to expect he would. This lack of interest in them they were far from resenting. Their relations with him were on a purely business basis, and they neither looked for nor desired social recognition. If Mitchell possessed the capacity for friendship, which was questionable, for he was such an alert commercial man, such a modern human, money-making machine, the young men felt they never even touched the outer fringe of his regard. To him they were merely two instruments to be used for his own purposes. Monro said, when they talked this over in their tent, that Mitchell would as soon think of them, outside of their capacity to serve him, as Monro himself would think of making a friend of the theodolite.

One enchanting autumn day a fisherman anxious for information regarding the piscatorial possibilities of the river accosted the surveyors. He was well equipped with the latest and most expensive paraphernalia of the sport, and seemed to dress the part to perfection. The surveyors were compelled to confess their ignorance of the gentle art; they had never even suspected the existence of trout

in the stream, although there might be many. Neither did they know anything of the fish, or the season for catching them. The fisher was disappointed. He had great difficulty, he said, in finding anyone who knew the rivers, so he supposed he would have to experiment for himself. He, too, was tenting, and asked permission to pitch his canvas near thier camp. McAllister replied that, so far as he knew, woods, river and bank were free to all comers, and thus, for a few days, the fisherman and his attendants were their neighbours. The sportsman was a sociable person who sat with them beside their log fire at night and told most interesting stories. Like themselves, he was originally from the west, but of late years had lived mainly in New York, and the more keenly enjoyed his outing that he was kept close to a desk the greater part of the year.

"What do you think he's fishing for?" asked Jim of his comrade one evening when they were returning to camp. "He never brings in any fish, if you notice."

"Oh, I guess he's all right," answered Ben. "I shouldn't wonder but the absence of fish is a peculiarity of the city fisherman. Are your suspicions on the upward move again? He never asks us any questions about our business."

"No, he doesn't. He's a deep man, and I think he'll get at all we know without cross-examination."

"Which isn't much. I don't see that we need be so extra careful, because, after all, we know no more about what we are at than when we started, and we had mighty little information to begin on."

"Well, such as we have, he's not going to get any of it."

"Jimmy, this business is ruining the simplicity of your nature. You'll be suspicious of every stranger for the rest of your life."

"He's a railroad man."

"What makes you think so?"

"A hundred little expressions. He never says half-past nine. His phrase is every night, 'Well, it's nine-thirty; I guess I'll turn in.'"

"But 'turn in' is a nautical expression. You might just as well accuse him of being a sea captain."

"It's used as often in a sleeping-car as aboard ship. I'm sure he's a railroad man."

When the two reached camp that evening they found a horseman from Pillageville awaiting them. He had just arrived with a telegram for Monro, and the latter knew before he opened it that the message was from Mitchell, who rarely used the postal service. The sender informed Monro that he would arrive at Pillageville by the noon train on Thursday, and he wished the easiest covered buggy the place afforded to be ready for him at the station. He further requested Monro's personal attendance, and held him responsible for the buggy, even if he had to get it forwarded from Asheville or further.

"What do you make of that?" inquired Jim, reading the communication aloud.

"Mitchell's ill, I should say," replied Ben. "He generally goes to his ranch on horseback, I understand. I suppose a buggy can be driven to the farm, but the road is pretty bad."

"I take it that he will have a lady with him."

"Perhaps so. Let's see; this is Tuesday. What are you going to do?"

"Nothing can be done to-night. I'll get up early and ride to Pillageville to-morrow morning. I may have to telegraph for a buggy."

Thus Wednesday morning found Jim astride his horse on the road to the distant village. He was still half a dozen miles from the place when he saw a rider galloping toward him, and thought at first that another telegram was on its way to him, but closer inspection showed the rider to be a woman. As the two neared each other, both pulled up with exclamations of surprise.

"Why, Mr. Monro, what are you doing here?"

"Good morning, Miss Van Ness; I was just going to ask the same question of you. This is a long distance from Montreal."

"It is no further for me than for you, is it?"

"That is true. When did you return to New York?"

"Oh, I've been home for some time. When did you become a resident of North Carolina?"

"Almost from the moment I bade you good-bye. I spent but one day in New York, and then came right on here?"

"Is your companion with you?"

"Yes, we've been working together all summer."

"Getting on well, I hope. You were very ambitious, you know."

"Yes, I think we are getting along pretty well."

"Think! Don't you *know* whether you are or not?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't," said Jim with a laugh. "I've seen my employer only once since we arrived, and he expressed neither satisfaction nor censure. He's a taciturn man. He is coming here to-morrow, so perhaps I shall learn more definitely how I stand with him."

"Then his coming has brought you out of the woods, I suppose. Am I correct in guessing you are riding to Pillageville?"

"Yes. Won't you turn round, or are you going somewhere in particular?"

"No, I am just out for a morning ride. There's nothing else to do in this outlandish place. My father is here on business, and I came with him. He wished me to go on to Asheville until he was ready to return, but I thought I would rather stay here."

"Then you have my sympathy. I stopped a week in the hotel, and thought it about as bad as laziness could make it."

"Oh, I'm not at the hotel, but in my father's private car, with all the luxuries of the season, including my French maid and an excellent cook. You must come and have dinner with us, and then you will appreciate the resources of a private car. We are side-tracked down below the freight shed; No. 20 Railroad Avenue, I call it; but look out for the trains when you cross our front yard."

Grace Van Ness had turned toward Pillageville and the two now rode along side by side, walking their horses. They formed a striking contrast—civilisation and the

frontier. The girl's New-York-made exquisitely fitting-riding costume seemed the last triumph of the tailoring art; the young man in rough-and-tumble suit, flannel shirt, open at the neck, face and throat browned with exposure, wide-brimmed slouch hat picturesquely crowning all, produced a general cow-boy effect that evidently attracted his companion, for she glanced shyly at him now and then with a brief look that had no displeasure in it. And yet Jim was wishing all the time that he had his good clothes on.

"Have you been here long?" he asked.

"Not very long, but I can't tell how many more days we may have to stay. You see, one of those tiresome railway problems is to the front at this moment; they always crop up in the most uninteresting places. This problem has been threatening in one shape or another for the last twenty years, but lately it has assumed an acute form. It is the old fight for the Boontown Notch."

"The Boontown Notch?"

"Yes, that is a cut through the mountains some distance from where we are."

"Oh, I know it well."

"I don't, but I know it has been trouble enough to every one interested in southern railways. Each line wants to get the right of way through the Notch, but the other roads obstruct the granting of that right to any one corporation, and, as usual, the roads can't agree on a joint line to be held in common. That's what father proposed long ago, and now the thing he predicted has happened. A man has got a bill through the legislature which father says is the cleverest thing done this century. You see there is a law—"

"Miss Van Ness, wait a moment. I think I should warn you before you say any more. I suspect I am in the employ of the enemy. One question: is Mr. Van Ness the lone fisherman?"

"Why, yes. It isn't possible you are one of the engineers?"

"That's exactly what I am."

"O dear, O dear, and here I've gone and put you on your guard."

"Not more so than I was before. I knew he was a railroad man. He didn't learn anything from me, and wouldn't if he stayed there a year."

The amused laughter of the girl floated over the echoless plain.

"Don't be so sure," she said at last. "He told me you knew nothing of engineering."

"I guess I know as much about engineering as he does of fishing. I have at least run a line, and he has thrown many a line, but hasn't caught a fish."

Maud Van Ness bent in laughter over her horse's neck. Jim appreciated the comicality of the situation with equal gusto, and thus two young people made merry over a matter which was causing older and wiser folk much anxiety.

"What else did he learn?" asked Monro at last.

"Do you think I am going to tell you? Not likely! I have told you too much already."

"You haven't told me anything. In my rigid honesty I stopped you the moment I had an inkling of how the land lay."

"Yes, you two are pretty honest young men; otherwise you would have taken the million and made off with it."

"The million! What million?"

"The million dollars that was placed to your credit in the Pillageville bank. Is there another million somewhere else?"

Jim, in his astonishment, whistled a long, surprised whistle.

"Why, didn't you know that?" she asked. "What do you know about the business, then?"

"Very little, I must admit. If Mr. Van Ness had all the knowledge in my possession it wouldn't do him any more good than if he looted my engineering equipment."

"Then why are you so guarded?"

"Because I promised not to tell."

"Sworn to secrecy? How interesting. Who administered the oath, and why, if you knew nothing?"

"Really, Miss Van Ness, I must not answer you."

"But you *have* answered me. Still, perhaps, when Mr. Mitchell comes to-morrow, he may remove the ban of silence."

"What do you know of Mitchell, Miss Van Ness? I am certain I never mentioned his name."

"Didn't you say he was coming to-morrow?"

"Yes—no—I said—I said my employer was coming."

"Isn't that the same thing? Isn't Mr. Mitchell your employer?"

"Perhaps he is, or one of them—"

"Oh, you have two."

"Now, look here, Miss Van Ness, I'm not going to say another word about employers or railroads. Let's talk of Montreal; lovely city, isn't it?"

"Very. Father says he's glad he isn't going to be manager of your road."

"Why?"

"Because," laughed the girl, "he could never sleep on rainy nights. He says every freshet from the mountains will carry your roadbed into the next county."

"Well," admitted Jim, ruefully, "I guess I am running it a little close to the river, in places."

"All of which convinces him that your people do not intend to build the road. In fact, Mr. James Monro, you are engaged in a huge blackmailing operation."

"I, certainly, am not. I'm doing a piece of work for a specified salary."

"So you won't round on the gang; isn't that the phrase they use in the criminal courts?"

"I suppose it is, but as I don't know anything against the gang, therefore I can't round."

"If you did, would you?"

"I should leave their employ, but I would keep my promise to them."

"Now I wonder if that's right or wrong? There's always two ways of looking at a thing, isn't there?"

"Oh, a dozen, probably, but that's my way. Still, you haven't told me what suggested the name of Mitchell to you?"

"I suppose there's no harm in telling that. Mitchell is the man who got the bill through the state legislature; I surmised that he was your employer, although father thought he was merely a dummy with bigger men or some railway company at the back of him. Everyone, except you, knows about Mr. Mitchell and his clever bill."

"What is this bill?"

"You are asking a good many questions for a man who refuses to answer any."

"I've answered more of yours than I intended."

"Thank you. That admission is valuable, and in reward, I'll tell you all about the bill. There is a statute in North Carolina which enables a man to get a short bill passed through the legislature giving him power to construct a tramway between one factory and another, if he owns two that need connecting. Mr. Mitchell owns a saw-mill and a planing-mill. He got a bill passed through the legislature authorising him to build a tramway of standard gauge between the two mills. That's all."

"I don't see anything important in that."

"Neither did the state legislature, nor the governor, nor the railway attorneys, who are supposed to watch on behalf of their roads at the capital; but they saw it when they learned that the planing mill was in Pillageville, and the saw-mill in Boontown, one on each side of the Notch, more than fifty miles apart."

"By George! That was a cute move. Mitchell's just the man to think of such a trick."

"Ah, then you know him after all?"

"I never denied knowledge of him. Can't they rescind the act, or break it in some way—it's so evidently a trick?"

"How can they? Mr. Mitchell is quite within his right. Everything has been done legally, and no one can say even now that he intends anything more than a road to carry lumber from one mill to the other. But once the rails are down who can prophesy what will run over them? You may depend they will try to have the act annulled, but it is a very easy thing to prevent an act

passing, compared with repealing an act already signed by the governor."

"But why didn't Mr. Van Ness go direct to Mitchell when he discovered he was the man?"

"I suppose that is what he will have to do ultimately, but such a move is a last resort. Besides, he wanted to know whether Mitchell was the principal or merely an agent. He also wanted to know whether they really intended to build the road or were only—only—"

"Bluffing?"

"Exactly."

"Well, Miss Van Ness, I shall tell Mr. Mitchell to-morrow that I can no longer be an employé of his. I shall ask him outright if this is the swindle I now suppose it to be."

"Do you expect he will tell you the truth?"

"Possibly not. I shall know more about that to-morrow."

"I wouldn't do anything rash if I were you; besides, you have your partner to consider."

"My partner will think just as I do—more so. He is a better man than I am."

"You can't expect me to believe that, Mr. Monro."

"I hope you won't, but it is true nevertheless."

"Please don't do anything definite until I have a talk with my father, and then I will meet you again. He naturally sees things much clearer than I do, and, in business, it is better to take a man's view than a woman's."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"Oh yes, it is. A woman is apt to be prejudiced, and then you must not forget that what I think of Mr. Mitchell is mere surmise. It is quite possible that he is as honest as a gold dollar. Promise me not to send in your resignation until I see you again."

"All right. I promise."

"Thank you. Now that we are near the village I must turn back. I rather thought I should meet my father, but this is almost too early for him, and perhaps he may not come in at all to-day. Good-bye!"

She turned her horse, and, with a wave of her hand, galloped to the north before he could make any reply. He sat there gazing after her. Once she looked back and waved her hand again, he lifting his slouch hat in salute. Then, with a sigh that was perhaps for a lost occupation, he rode slowly into the village and gave up his horse to the negro at the tavern. The proprietor was seated on a tilted-back wooden chair under the verandah, his feet on the rungs, just as Monro had left him some weeks before.

CHAPTER II

"BY A SEALED COMPACT, WELL RATIFIED"

MONRO got the covered buggy and a pair of horses to draw it, with a negro to drive the team. Then he waited on the platform until the noon train arrived. He saw the palatial private car side-tracked at the extremity of the yard, but there was no sign of its inmates. The more he thought over the conversation which had taken place between Miss Van Ness and himself, the higher rose his resentment against Glassthrop and Mitchell. He was convinced that they were blackmailers on a huge scale, and he resented his having been made their instrument, yet his conscience told him that this aggressive honesty was rather belated, for both he and Ben had suspected something of the sort before they left New York.

When the train came in he thought for a moment that Mitchell was not aboard, and was shocked to see the man he sought being helped slowly down the steps by two others, his head sunk into his shoulders, his face of ghastly pallor, a bent old man, with the imprint of death on every shrunken line of his frame. All Monro's anger vanished as he sprang forward to meet him. He thought there had been an accident on the road.

"My God, Mr. Mitchell," he cried, "what has happened?"

"Nothing, nothing," snarled Mitchell, in hollow tones, irritation thrilling them. "Have you got that buggy?"

"Yes, sir; it's outside here with two horses."

"Well, don't stand chattering there, but help me to it."

Monro lent his arm, and Mitchell leaned heavily upon it shuffling his feet along the platform like a decrepit veteran.

"What's this nigger doing here?" asked Mitchell fretfully, when they reached the buggy. "Get out of this; I want a white man to drive me."

The negro stepped down from the buggy grinning amiably.

"Give him a dollar," continued Mitchell. "You can drive, I suppose?"

"Yes, after a fashion," replied Monro.

"Roads pretty rough, are they?"

"They're not as good as they might be."

"Well, drive slowly; there's plenty of time. Tell the nigger to take your horse to the ranch. Now let's get out of this."

Monro drove on in silence, Mitchell leaning back in the buggy, with closed eyes, palpably exhausted by his exertion. When they were about a mile from the village he said faintly:

"It is nothing serious, you know. A day or two on the farm will put me all right again. I feel better already in this air."

Monro thought he did not look it.

"Have you been ill?" he asked.

"No. It's just a sudden breakdown. I have them now and then, and whenever I feel one coming on I always make straight for the ranch. There I quit thinking and get the rumble of the train out of my head. That's the first symptom, car wheels rumbling, rumbling, rumbling over my brain, night and day, all the time."

"Have you seen a physician about it?"

"No need for that. I know all a physician can tell me. There's nothing wrong with me, merely too much travel on the cars, and rushing about here and there. I seem to be spending my life in cabs on the jump to catch trains, hiring a special when the regular train pulls out before I get there."

"Do you think it worth while?"

"Think *what* worth while?"

"That sort of life. If I had five millions, I'd take it easy."

"You don't know what you're talking about," replied Mitchell, the irritation returning to his voice. "What's five millions in New York? I'm a poor man in New York. I'm all right. This is merely a nervous collapse. I'll be breaking colts in a week on the farm."

Again there was silence between them which lasted for a long time. Now and then Mitchell drew a deep breath as if the pure country air was revivifying him, as indeed it seemed to be doing. He sat up straighter in the buggy, and when the road inclined to the west until a row of stakes were visible across country Mitchell, noticing them, asked abruptly:

"That your surveying?"

"Yes, sir," answered Monro. "The line crosses the road here, and recrosses it a few miles further on. I ran it straight for the woods and then followed the stream. I expect to reach the Notch next week."

For the first time Mitchell laughed, a quiet, low, sneering chuckle. In spite of his employer's weak state, Monro felt all sympathy for the man ebbing away, and his old dislike for him and non-confidence in him returning.

"You'll never reach the Notch, my boy," said Mitchell. "You were never intended to go even as far as you have gone. Surely you two were not simpletons enough to imagine that we were going to build the road? We would have hired competent engineers if that had been the case."

"I thought perhaps you wanted a rough survey."

"Well, I guess we got it. Rough enough, I imagine, but it's answered its purpose, and now you fellows will have to look for another job, and that right away, too."

"I understood that if we gave satisfaction we might expect further employment from your firm," said Jim, quite forgetting, now that he saw dismissal ahead, his heroic determination of yesterday to resign.

"Oh, you can't come that game on me. I warned you plainly enough."

"I'm not trying any game, nor am I complaining. I

quite admit that you led us to expect nothing. When do we quit?"

"You *have* quit. The bank honours no more checks. I'll pay you up till to-day. The deal is finished."

"You spoke of our being simpletons, but I may tell you that never from the first did we believe in your road. We did our duty and kept quiet, as we were told to do."

"Yes, and got your pay. Don't overlook the fact that we held strictly to our arrangement with you."

"I wish I could get you to understand that I am making no protest. You have done exactly what you said, and we couldn't have any fault to find even if we searched for one. We've been generously paid and have saved our money."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"But I have some curiosity about the deal that was on, if it is not a secret."

"Oh, no secret at all, now that the thing is complete and the money paid over. A simple matter. We bought fifty thousand acres of timber land for a dollar an acre, which seems cheap, but the pine is practically valueless because it is so far from a railroad. Very well; we supply the missing link, and you two begin to survey the railway line. We didn't say to anyone that a railroad was going to be built, and we don't say so now. Ostensibly we had nothing to do with the new line, and ostensibly we did not care particularly to sell timber lands. The purchasers approached us, offering us five dollars an acre. We said we didn't believe the road was going through, but that if it did the land was worth one hundred dollars an acre, if it was worth a cent, all of which is quite true. The syndicate finally offered ten dollars an acre for half the property, and we sold, netting two hundred thousand dollars on the deal, and retaining twenty-five thousand acres of land that has cost us nothing. They asked us few questions, and our answers were invariably truthful."

"But the scheme was a swindle, nevertheless."

"Oh, bless you, no. The land is well worth the money

they paid, and the purchasers imagine they have taken advantage of a couple of New York men who don't know what is going on in North Carolina. Perhaps they have; perhaps they have, but let 'em build the road, if they want it. I'll give them the franchise cheap; in fact, I'd have thrown it in free, if they'd asked for it."

"Will you give it to me if I ask for it?"

"No, sir. I never give anything away when a deal's finished. The time to make a bargain with me is when I want something from you. I'm through with you now."

As they neared the ranch Mitchell's garrulousness subsided and he became somewhat like his old self again. He got out of the buggy alone, refusing assistance.

"Go back to your camp," he commanded, "and send instruments, tents, and everything here to-morrow. I'll pay off the hands and they can walk to Pillageville. You two may drive back in this buggy, and turn it over to its owner, when you've signed receipts."

Darkness had fallen before Monro reached the camp and found McAllister waiting for him beside the log fire. Jim's first question was:

"Where is Mr. Van Ness?"

"Who?"

"The lone fisherman; has he been to Pillageville since I left?"

"No. He stayed right by me, seemingly wishing to cultivate my acquaintance in your absence. Jim, I've come to your opinion; he is a railroad man, and he's here to find out what we're doing."

"Yes; he's Mr. Van Ness, the railway manager. He's still here then?"

"Just gone to his tent. How did you find out about him?"

"That's a long story. Where's the cook? I must have something to eat, for Mitchell forgot to invite me to stay and have a meal with him. Ben, we're bounced. This bogus line goes no further."

As Jim sat at supper in the tent he told in low voice,

fearing other listeners, the story of the two days. Nearing the end of the narration, Ben paced up and down the narrow limits of the tent in great excitement, running his fingers through his hair, and barking out a question now and then.

"There's no use making a fuss about it, Ben," concluded Monro. "We're dismissed, and there's nothing more to be said. And after all, Mitchell gave us fair warning at the start."

"Oh, that," snapped Ben, "that's not worth a moment's thought. Now, Jim, will you stand by me?"

"Of course."

"Sure? I tell you, Jim, the finger of the Lord is in this! Our fortune's made. Now let's have a fair understanding. What I fear is this girl. You're not going to allow her to complicate the business, are you?"

"How do you mean, complicate?"

"Well, Jim, plain out and out—you're a silent fellow where women are concerned—not like me a bit—I tell you everything. Now, I want to know about this girl. Are you in love with her?"

"What has that to do with the matter?"

"But are you?"

"Certainly not. I haven't as much cheek as you have."

"Then you can have no objection to my making a deal with her father?"

"No-o-o," replied Jim, slowly; "but I shouldn't like you to use any information she gave me, or to mention her name, you know."

"That's all right. I'll never mention her name. Of course, I'm going to act on the knowledge I now possess, but here's a point that puzzles me. Do you imagine that so shrewd a man as Mitchell doesn't know the value of the concession he got from the legislature? Now here have certain people been trying for months to find out what we are doing. At any time since we started we might have got big money for telling the little we knew. Glassthrop and Mitchell warned us that this would be

the case, therefore they must have known who was going to make the inquiry. Don't you think so?"

"No. I imagine they intended it to leak out that a railway was in progress. What they wanted concealed was that they, the owners of the land, were the real projectors of the railroad."

"But it doesn't seem possible that, with all this spying going on, Mitchell should not have become aware of the value of his franchise.'

"One would think so; but you must remember that his attention has been concentrated on the profit he would make by the sale of his land, clearing, as he has done, two hundred thousand dollars in the transaction. Then, railroad business is out of his line. Besides, as you have just said, spying means secrecy, and the railway people have been very quiet in their investigations."

"Well, I'm going to have a try for it, and if the lone fisherman isn't in his bunk I intend to talk business with him now."

Ben bolted out of the tent and ran down the bank to the spot where the fisherman's canvas gleamed white in the darkness.

"Have you turned in yet, sir?" he asked.

"No. Lift up the flap and enter. It's you, McAllister, I take it?"

"Yes, sir," said Ben as he came in.

The tent of the fisherman was no such rough and ready affair as that of the engineers. It had a board floor and all modern improvements. The manager sat in a canvas chair at a camp table with many documents on it, which he casually covered with a newspaper as his visitor entered.

"Anything new, McAllister? You seem excited, which is something unusual in this quiet locality."

"I don't know that there's anything new, Mr. Van Ness; new to me, perhaps, but not to you. I have found out who you are and why you are here, that is all."

The manager maintained his impassive demeanour when the other mentioned his name, then he said nonchalantly:

"Well, that ought to simplify matters a bit, don't you think?"

"I think so, and that's why I'm here. Mr. Van Ness, how much are you willing to pay for the franchise that will allow you to run a railway through Boontown Notch?"

"Are you the possessor of the franchise?"

"For the sake of negotiation, take it for granted that I am."

"I thought you were an employé, not a principal?"

"I'll answer your questions when you first answer mine."

"Which is?"

"How much will you give?'

"How much do you want?"

"A million."

Mr. Van Ness threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"I wouldn't give a million for the state," he said.

"No more would I, if I had it. I merely mention the amount as a beginning of negotiation. You seemed reluctant about naming a figure, so I name one."

"Quite so. Well, what do you say to ten thousand?"

"I say that if you wanted the concession and went to the legislature for it, you would laugh at the idea of ten thousand as a beginning of your lobbying fund alone; and then very likely you wouldn't succeed, for the combined opposition would outbid you."

"You take a cynical view of the legislative function for so young a man. Doesn't the good of the state count for anything? The opening up of a new district, and all that?"

"Have you found the good-of-the-state idea of much assistance to you, Mr. Van Ness, in getting the right to go through the Notch?"

"Oh, well, it counts, you know. You must never ignore the honest element either in politics or business. My experience is that the man who depends on bribery, if that's what you're hinting at, is ultimately as unsuccessful *as the man who* has visionary notions about the incor-

ruptibility of everybody. A judicious combination is the winning card."

" Can honesty and dishonesty be judiciously combined? "

" Ah, now we are wandering into the ethics of things. Let's stick to the Notch. We will take it that within a week you are in a position to make over this franchise to me, which means that you are either the possessor of it, or that you have an option on it at a certain price, and that you want to sell at a profit. Very good. Have you any objection to stating the price you are to pay? "

" I cannot yet tell what price I shall have to pay."

" Then that answers the question I asked you a little time since. You do not own the concession. You are selling the lion's skin before killing the lion. Now, I have a shrewd idea that I know who owns the concession. Mitchell is the man who put it through; he likely is still in possession of it. He arrived at his ranch to-day, my men inform me, and your comrade went to meet him. The concession has probably been offered to your friend, and you two have not the capital in hand to purchase. Am I right in my surmises? "

" Only partly."

" Why should I deal with you? Why not eliminate the middle man? Why should I not go direct to Mitchell and outbid you? "

" Simply because you've got some sense, Mr. Van Ness."

" Flattering, but indefinite. Explain."

" The moment you go to Mitchell the game is up. He's just as sharp as they make 'em. When a great railway manager or anyone connected with him enters the contest, and Mitchell gets a hint of the value of the concession to wealthy railway combinations, there need then be no laughter when a million is mentioned. You change the venue from the woods of Carolina to Broadway, New York, and that is not a cheapening process, as you are well aware."

" Then Mitchell does not know the value of his holding? "

"He does not."

"What has he been fooling about here for?"

"He has been selling his land. He has just sold twenty-five thousand acres of this forest for ten dollars an acre. Before this engineering bluff was put up he bought it for one dollar an acre."

"I see. And you have now been discharged?"

"Exactly."

"Naturally you are disappointed, and he has offered you the concession at a price, so that if you get other capitalists to go on with it you are not out of a job."

"Practically that's it, although, to speak frankly, no price has been named."

"If a man wants to do business with me that's the way I like to hear him talk. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. Of course, you understand I'm not acting for myself in this, but on behalf of certain companies in which I am interested, and which have delegated certain limited powers to me. We are willing to pay one hundred thousand dollars for the concession. You come to terms with Mitchell, taking your friend as witness. If you can buy, well and good; if not, get Mitchell to put down in writing what he will do; then come to me at my private car in Pillageville, and I will furnish the amount of money you lack to complete the deal. When the franchise is made over to me I'll pay the rest of the hundred thousand to you. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly."

"Very well. We'll just jot these particulars down on a couple of sheets of paper so there can be no misunderstanding. You'll keep one and I the other."

When this was done and McAllister rose to go, Van Ness searching among his papers brought forth a form not filled in.

"This is a blank deed of transfer. I don't suggest that you use it, but I advise you to read it before you see Mitchell, so that you may be able to judge approximately whether or not the document you get from him is what it should be. Of course it would be better to fill in these blanks and have them signed and witnessed properly, but

if you come to him too well equipped, he may suspect at once that there is more in this than appears on the surface, and so may break off negotiations. He will know that these blank forms do not grow in the woods of North Carolina. Probably he has one or more of these forms in his own possession, and if he is dealing squarely with you, which is always possible, may use it. Your friend and one of his own men should sign as witnesses. I may say that it is advisable in a case like this to close the negotiations at the first interview if you can. The matter, as I understand it, will require not too eager handling. Tact is necessary, but it is in the successful manipulation of such materials as are at your disposal that money is made. Have you any cash to pay down?"

"Jim and I together have over a thousand dollars in the Pillageville bank."

"Have you got a cheque book with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I advise you to give him your cheques for as much as you will be able to pay when you receive his document. Take a receipt for it and promise the rest, say, within a week, or such time as will give you the opportunity for getting the remainder. Go cautiously, but not too cautiously, and luck be with you. Good-night."

When McAllister got outside of the tent he drew a deep breath of the cool mountain air. "It's too good to be true," he whispered to himself. "It can't be true. O Lord, guide me that I make no mistake!"

Van Ness sat in his tent, looking straight ahead of him, a frown wrinkling his fine intellectual brow. "What hardened villains business makes of us!" he said to himself. "It's a shame to take advantage of the simple innocence of that young man. The franchise is cheap at half a million, but, alas! business is business."

CHAPTER III

"THE DEVIL SHALL HAVE HIS BARGAIN"

NEXT day the two young men, accompanied by the camp followers, with the tents, instruments, and other paraphernalia of their outing, went through the forest to the ranch where Mr. Mitchell hoped to recover health and tone. The impedimenta was placed in a shed, the workmen lounged about smoking, while the two engineers entered the large log house for their final interview with their late employer. Both were in a state of suppressed excitement, but neither wished to show it. Each felt that the success of his life depended on the outcome of this momentous conference. Ben was to do the talking; Jim was to be the silent onlooker. It was to be a contest, not of spoken lies perhaps—Ben's principles would not admit of his telling a falsehood—but the lies were to be acted, if either of them had gone deep enough into his inner consciousness to realise that fact.

Mitchell received them with much of his old impassive calm. He said he already felt a great deal better; the mountain air was reviving him, and the car wheels rolling over his brain would soon cease their rumbling. In fact he had had, for he first time in weeks, a reasonably good night's sleep. These preliminaries of polite inquiry and answer being over, Mitchell became the alert man of business at once; seated himself at a desk, asked them to draw up chairs near it, called for accounts and statements, ran through them rapidly but minutely, seeming to understand their import at a glance. He had a keen scent for the most trivial error, demanding explanations wherever anything was obscure, and comparing vouchers with swift conclusiveness. Jim looked on in amazement. Here sat a man who was in possession of two hundred thou-

sand dollars through their efforts. Had they been dishonest or talkative men he could not have carried through his scheme to success; yet he was verifying minute details to the last cent. Surely after it was all balanced and found correct he would at least offer something extra to the working men outside? But it was not so. He counted out from his cash box the precise amount due to each, wrote, with his own hand, receipts in full, had these signed, and the men were curtly dismissed without even a word of thanks. Business.

Ben and Jim took what was their due, having appended signatures to the documents presented to them, and then Mitchell leaned back in his chair with an air of conclusion, which said plainly to them: "Now what are you two waiting for?" What he said aloud was: "You can ride back in the buggy, which will oblige me, and make the journey comfortable to yourselves."

Ben caught his breath, cast his eyes on the floor, and began the diplomatic battle.

"I suppose, Mr. Mitchell, there is little use in asking if you or Mr. Glassthrop—if there is any chance that you may reconsider your determination—the conclusion which my friend tells me you have come to, and go on with the road?"

"Not the slightest chance of it."

"But if you should change your minds, would you have any objection to employing us again?"

"Certainly. If we were such fools as to go on with the road, we should employ competent engineers. I am an honest man, and there is no good in holding out to you polite hopes that will never be fulfilled."

"But don't you think such a road would pay?"

"Do *you* think so?"

"Why shouldn't it?"

"Simply because there is neither freight nor passenger traffic to go over it. Isn't that reason enough?"

"But there is the timber."

"How long would that last? Could you get enough out of the freight on the logs or the lumber to pay for

your roadbed and your right of way, not to mention rolling stock? Of course you couldn't, and after the timber was gone, where would you be? Wait another century for more trees to grow? No, sir. It isn't good enough."

"Don't you think a company might be formed—you said you and Mr. Glassthrop formed companies—"

"Yes, but we must have something to form a company on. I have no doubt it could be done—. Companies can be promoted for any fool purpose, but we wouldn't touch it. In the first place it is not in our line; we don't handle railroads; come smash if we attempted it. Too much capital required; too much risk, and too much swindling by the heads of the concerns. They want to do all the grabbing themselves, and they could easily freeze us out, for, as I told your friend yesterday, we are but poor men in New York. Poor but honest, as the saying is, and we can't buck against Wall Street. But don't let me discourage you. For all I know, you two may be the coming railroad kings of America. I've seen stranger things than that happen. If you want to try your hand, I'll let you have the franchise cheap; I'm through with it."

"Don't you think an inexpensive logging railway, such as they have in the woods of northern Michigan, might pay—a road with no cuttings, no embankments, laid with second-hand rails, and equipped with old discarded rolling stock?"

"I don't know but it would; still, as I tell you, all that is out of my line. I'd be glad to see you build it, though; it wouldn't hurt my property a little bit."

"Would you put any money in such a line if we succeeded in getting up a small company to go on with?"

"Not a cent."

"Even if railroads, logging or otherwise, are out of your line, you can give us a hint as to the possibility of getting up money for such an enterprise. What would be our chances?"

"Oh, I don't know. You never can tell what two young energetic men might do. I should say there's a fair fighting chance for you, depending altogether on how you set

about it, and whether you can interest capitalists in it; depending, too, a little on talk, but not so much as people suppose, for a great deal more rests with the project you place before them. Do you know any capitalists?"

"One, but he says he won't touch it."

"Meaning me. Well, you see, I never meddle with anything I can't control, and which I know nothing about, but I'm willing to help you at the start by letting you have the franchise cheap. I'm always willing to sell anything I've got." He stooped down, opened a drawer in the desk, pulled a paper from within, and threw it on the table. "There is the document with possibilities of wealth in it for two young speculators. How much will you give for it?"

Ben slowly shook his head.

"You wouldn't let us have it on spec, would you?"

"You mean, make it over to you and trust to chance for getting anything for it? No, sir. I never do business that way. I sell cheap, but on a cash basis. How much money have you got?"

"I've got five hundred dollars in the Pillageville bank."

Mitchell tossed the document back into its former place again, and kicked the drawer shut with his foot.

"Five hundred dollars! What's the use wasting time talking about five hundred dollars? I wouldn't walk to the foot of my ranch for five hundred dollars."

"I'll lend you my five hundred dollars," said Jim, speaking for the first time, "but, like Mr. Mitchell, I won't have anything to do with the matter myself."

"There, you see, your credit is good," put in Mitchell with a smile that was half a sneer. "A man whose credit is good can do much in this country, except during a panic."

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Mitchell, if we succeed, we raise the price of the property you hold anywhere up to half a million or so. You ought to take that into consideration."

"*If* you succeed! There's a lot in that 'if.'"

"If we don't, then we lose our money, and your fran-

chise is just so much waste paper. A thousand dollars is a good deal to pay for a bit of waste paper."

"Quite so, but what is waste paper in useless hands becomes property when the right man takes hold of it. You offer me a thousand dollars, cash, mind, no three months from date business."

"Certainly. Cash down."

"All right, the franchise is yours. Got your cheque books with you?"

"Yes, sir," said Jim and Ben simultaneously.

"Well, we've talked more about it than the whole thing is worth; you write your cheques and I'll make out a transfer."

As they wrote their cheques they saw him take from another drawer a blank form, similar to the one Ben had in his pocket, and, with the rapidity of long familiarity, fill it out. Once he looked up sharply and said to McAllister:

"I am selling to you alone; not to the two of you."

"To me alone," replied Ben.

"Then Monro can witness this, with my man."

The man was called in and appended his signature under that of Monro. Mitchell glanced at the two cheques for five hundred dollars each and pinned them together.

"Now, gentlemen, I propose to send my man to Pillageville with all these documents. He will go to the bank, present the cheques and then hand the other papers to you. This is no imputation on your good faith at all, but merely business. If I were you, I should take this deed of transfer to a lawyer there and have him look it over, and tell you whether it is all right or not. That's no imputation on me. If he makes alterations you can bring it back here and I will initial the changes, or you can get him to write out a new deed which I will sign. Anything else I can do for you?"

"Nothing else, thank you, Mr. Mitchell."

"Then I'll bid you good-bye. I feel a little tired over even this trivial amount of business, and I want to get out into the open air again. I may say there is just as much chance of your getting up a company for a logging railway, or any other, as there is of your getting to the

moon, but that's your affair, not mine. A little experience won't hurt either of you, and so, good-day, gentlemen."

Mitchell's man got astride a horse and galloped on ahead. The buggy and team of horses that had taken Mitchell to the ranch the day before was standing in readiness, and into the vehicle climbed McAllister and Monro, the face of the former pale with excitement. Ben breathed quickly, like a man who had won a hard race. Jim took up the reins and drove off.

"Well, Benny," he said at last, "was the Lord your partner in this deal?"

"You bet he was!" cried Ben with enthusiasm.

"I don't believe it. The devil presided over that negotiation, and how he must have chuckled! There was Mitchell taking, as he thought, advantage of two greenhorns; selling what he regarded as a bit of useless paper for all the money we had. I saw him figuring up our forty dollars a week on a sheet of paper to make sure he was rooking us of every penny we possessed. That's why he threw the document into the drawer again. He knew there was another five hundred in our possession, and he was not going to let us escape till he got it in his clutches. And at last, he quite cynically admits we have no chance of ever getting our money back, after having pretended he thought there was something in your scheme for a logging railway. And yet, of the two of you, he strikes me as the more honest, for never did you give him a hint that you were betting on a sure thing."

"And what about you, sitting there and saying nothing, yet knowing you were going to benefit as much as I? Isn't there a dishonesty of silence as well as a dishonesty of speech?"

"Oh, me! Well, I think I'm the worst of the lot; and yet I don't know. I don't drag in the Lord as you do, and I'm not plainly partner with the devil, as Mitchell is. Half a dozen times I felt like shouting out, 'O you precious pair of scoundrels!' The fact that I repressed myself shows me to be as great a scoundrel as either."

"Ninety-nine thousand dollars, Jimmy; ninety-nine

thousand clear dollars; forty-nine thousand five hundred each! Not a scrap of writing between us, not even the spoken promise, yet you know you're going to get that money as sure as I get it. You can hardly accuse a man who will divide as fair as that of dishonesty?"

"I have an old-fashioned notion, Ben, that this money, if we really secure it, which I doubt, will not do us a bit of good. I feel it in my bones."

"If we get it? Why do you say that?"

"It seems to me there must be a trip-up somewhere for two such villains as we are. Surely, we are walking into a trap of some sort. We deserve it so."

"Don't, Jimmy, don't! Don't talk like that. It is my own fear, and I'm all in a tremble. While we were talking to Mitchell my knees began to wobble backward and forward, and my heels to chatter against the floor. I couldn't control my muscles, and felt as if I must scream or go crazy. My nerves are all racked to pieces, and if we slip up now, with the money almost in our grasp—I—I, well, I don't know just what will happen."

"Oh, I know. As the wicked partner, I'll do the swearing for the firm, and we'll get some work that will earn our bread and butter; wiser people than we were before, having lost a thousand dollars and learned something in return for the money. That's what will happen."

"If you knew how queer I am feeling, Jimmy, you would have more mercy than to talk in the way you are doing. If you can't talk sense, keep quiet; that's easy."

"You said just now it wasn't. Brace up, Benny; you are as white as a ghost, and if it will do you any good to shout, bellow away; we are in the wilderness, and there's no one to hear you."

"It means so much more to me than it does to you."

"Why, if you're going to divide up even? I confess I think you ought to have the lion's share. Now is your time to dicker with me. I'll compound the felony at the present moment for quarter the money, but once I get my hands on it, I'm not so sure I would let any of it go. Why does it mean more to you than to me?"

"Because, Jimmy, if we really gain the actual money, I'm going to get married right away."

"Ah! Are you going to tell the stern old gospeller at Stormboro how you gained the cash? You will want his consent, you know."

"I've got his daughter's consent; that's enough for me."

"I know the old man. It's to be a run-away match, I take it."

"If necessary," said Ben shortly, in a tone that closed the discussion. There was too much anxiety on the young man's mind to make conjectural discourse a pleasure. He nervously jerked the whip from its socket and struck one of the horses, and for a few minutes Jim had a panic-stricken team to control, the slight buggy swaying from side to side on the rough road like a skiff in a storm. Jim mastered his horses in grim silence, then took the whip from the other gently and said:

"I'll attend to this end of the show unassisted, if you don't mind."

"That horseman is away ahead of us, and I want to get there as soon as possible, for I can't tell what game Mitchell may have been up to. His man has both cheques and the papers."

"I want to get there, too, but I think we'll transact business better if we reach Pillageville with unbroken limbs."

The horses, with palpitating sides and smoking flanks, finally drew up at the door of the bank. Mitchell's man was standing on the sidewalk at the front, his horse tied to a post. He handed the documents to Ben and said:

"I was to wait until you had seen the lawyer."

"All right; I'll be back in a moment."

McAllister left Jim and went direct to the private car at the end of the station yard. There was no need for consulting a lawyer, if the documents were satisfactory to Van Ness. He found the manager waiting for him, and with him was a lawyer, so that Ben had done well to go to the private car direct.

The legal gentleman read the papers carefully, and pronounced them in proper form, whereupon he took his departure, leaving the two negotiants together. The manager was the first to speak.

"You have succeeded admirably," he said. "I won't ask you how much you have paid, for that is none of my business, but I made up my mind to-day that if you pulled this off in time for me to attach my car to the noon express, I would give you five thousand dollars extra to help pay expenses, and leave you in good humour over your bargain. No, not a word! As I told you last night, I am acting largely for others, so perhaps that explains my seeming generosity. It is easy to be lavish with other people's money. Here is a cheque for one hundred and five thousand dollars, and if you will just sign this receipt, and this second deed of transfer, we will consider the business at an end. I have a couple of men here who will witness your signature."

Thus the transaction was terminated to the eminent satisfaction of all concerned, for each party to the chaffering believed in his heart that he had cheated the person with whom he negotiated.

CHAPTER IV

"YOUR EXPOSITION ON THE HOLY TEXT"

BEFORE the train came in which was to carry him northward, Ben went to the hotel and wrote a hurried letter to Miss Constance Fraser of Stormboro, Ill. He told her that as soon as he had done an hour's business in New York he was coming west to marry her, travelling by the fastest train the lines leading sunsetwards afforded. He now possessed fifty-two thousand dollars, and he thought this was capital enough to begin housekeeping on. She should have no more school drudgery, thank God; and it would be his study throughout life to get for her everything she wanted. He hinted that perhaps this accumulation of wealth, so quickly won, would induce her father to withdraw the objection he had held against their engagement and give his sanction to their speedy marriage. The time, formerly discussed in their schoolhouse interview, had come when she must choose between her father and himself, if such a choice unfortunately became necessary through the reverend gentleman's continued prejudice against him. Perhaps a hint of this might help to soften the inevitable interview between her father and his prospective son-in-law. He boasted just a little about the money. He had always said he would be rich, and this was but a first instalment of what he would accumulate when he got into business in New York, aided and comforted by her advice and companionship. And so, hoping speedily to clasp her in his arms, he remained her true lover, Ben McAllister.

On the way to New York Ben persuaded his friend to come west with him and see him through that important crisis, the marriage service. Jim was rather reluctant; he had not the calm confidence which Ben possessed that the

ceremony would take place so soon, but the prospective groom was jubilantly optimistic, and would take no denial. He would carry the girl off, he said, in spite of her own opposition, or that of anyone else.

Their journey westward on this occasion was under different auspices to the trip they had taken to Chicago only a few months before, and in that difference lies the meaning of America. Then, the empty wheat car attached to the slow freight, a few dollars in the pocket; now, the swift Limited, and the luxurious Pullman, with an amount of money that seemed inexhaustible. To-morrow, what? The tardy freight again, perhaps, or a special train.

Jim quitted the palace car at Selbourn, the station before Stormboro, there to be in telegraphic communication with Ben; to engage a clergyman in an emergency, if necessary; to see after a license, of which the knew nothing, and in the event of all else failing, to arrange for a marriage before a justice. Ben continued his journey alone, having telegraphed to the Rev. Mr. Fraser the hour at which he would call upon him.

He found the old gentleman waiting for him in his study, and in the ominous coldness of his reception all Ben's former fear of the professor rose again within him, and he felt once more the snubbed boy at college, as those unsympathetic eyes gazed steadily and unflinchingly at him over the steel-rimmed spectacles. There was a mutual dislike between the two men, which the elder took little pains to conceal. Mr. Fraser waved his thin white hand towards a chair that stood opposite the table at which he sat, and McAllister sat down, red in the face, and as uncomfortable as a man may well be. The two-storied cottage was as silent as if it had never been inhabited. The professor had evidently cleared the decks for action.

"I received your telegram," he began, "but I may say that a slight conversation I previously had with my daughter led me to expect a visit, and gave me some intimation of its purport."

"May I ask, sir, where your daughter is at this moment?"

"She is where she should be, attending to her duties at the school."

"I have come from New York to ask your permission to marry her, she having already given her consent."

"Such I understood to be your intention. I formerly refused my assent to an engagement, which it seems you have entered into without my concurrence. Why should I look favourably upon a marriage when I could not sanction a betrothal?"

"Because circumstances have changed since then. There may have been some—some excuse—some understanding of your disapproval then, because I was poor, with little or no money, and apparently, as far as your judgment went, with small prospect of earning any. That no longer can be held against me. I have now more than fifty thousand dollars in the bank, and I am in business partnership with my old college friend, who has as much more."

"Lack of money had little to do with my objection to you as a son-in-law, and I find that the statement of the sum you name makes but small impression on my mind."

"Perhaps if you cared as much for your daughter as I do it would make a greater impression. It means, Mr. Fraser, that she will not have to rise early every morning and trudge out into the country, rain or shine, and drudge at the earning of her own living."

"I am not of those who believe idleness a blessing, or the earning of one's own living derogatory to character. Holy Scripture enjoins industry upon each of us, and my daughter's choice of an occupation is entirely her own, although I may say that it meets my approbation much more than does her inclination for you."

"What have you to urge against me?"

"My reading of your character leads me to suppose that it is an essentially light and frivolous one. I think you are unstable, flighty, with no fixed principles, flitting airily from one employment to another. I hear that since you left the college you have employed whatever education you acquired and whatever talents you possess, first,

in peddling like a vagabond about the country; then in some political partnership with some disreputable person; next I hear of you in Chicago, in New York, in Montreal, in one of the southern states. All this corroborates the opinion I had formed of you."

"Does it ever occur to you that you may be wrong in your estimate? Is the text, 'Judge not that ye be not judged,' eliminated from your Bible?"

"My dear sir, your flippant quotation from the Bible but bears out what I have said of you. Judgment implies a following sentence. That judgment I leave to God, as he commands me to do, 'Vengeance is mine and I will repay,' saith the Lord."

"That text must be a great consolation to you, Mr. Fraser."

"But while we leave judgment and vengeance to the Lord, we are nevertheless enjoined to be careful of the company we keep, and in the selecting of that company we must exercise qualities which may seem to an immature and ill-balanced mind like yours to resemble those of the judge. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, nor standeth in the way of sinners.'"

"Aye, continue the quotation, Mr. Fraser; 'Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,' where you have now so self-righteously placed yourself."

"You pervert the text, sir," cried the reverend gentleman, speaking for the first time with the heat of controversy. "'Scornful' in that connection means scorn of the Almighty."

"That is a matter of opinion. It may be that in scorning the least of his creatures you are, through him, scorning that creature's Creator."

"The devil quotes Scripture to serve his own purposes."

"That, sir, is what I have been endeavouring to imply."

"If you think there is anything to be gained by coming to browbeat me in my own house you are very much mistaken. I am not to be frightened from the path of rectitude."

"I have no such intention. I do not even hope to frighten you into that path. If you will pardon me, you are looking at this serious question, which affects you but remotely, entirely from your own personal point of view. Your daughter and myself are the persons who will suffer if a mistake is made. Has, then, your child's preference no weight with you?"

"It has great weight with me, but my daughter's preference now, and her preference five years hence, may be two vastly different things. I am placed here by Providence as her counsellor and guardian. It is my duty to prevent her making a mistake which may result in life-long unhappiness. She is an inexperienced girl; it is my desire that she profit by such small store of wisdom as a longer life has enabled me to accumulate. Come back to me five years from now, if you are both of the same mind, and bring me proof that you have been diligent in business, fearing the Lord, and I will withdraw my opposition to your union."

"We are both of the same mind, and I come to you now with that proof. Why then should we wait? Take no thought of the morrow, says the good Book, now is the appointed time."

"Again you pervert the words you should use with thoughtful reverence. Now, is the appointed time for salvation; not for marriage."

"Marriage and salvation are often synonymous. The wife shall leave father and mother and cling to her husband. Stand you not in the way of the fulfilment of that holy law."

"She is not yet your wife, but she is still my daughter. Honour thy father and thy mother; obey those set in authority over you, are commands not less imperative than the one you have misquoted."

"I have not misquoted the spirit of the text. But to return to the practical point. I say I am now ready to supply the proof you demand five years hence. I have been diligent in business. There is deposited in a bank in New York fifty-two thousand dollars that belongs to

me. They are paying me four per cent. on that deposit, which, if I did nothing else with the principal, would give me an annual income of over two thousand dollars a year, a sum in excess of any yearly income you have ever succeeded in acquiring with all your boasted experience. You are talking to me as if you were an experienced man reprimanding a shiftless boy, lecturing me as a conceited teacher lectures a despised pupil. I want you to understand, sir, that this is not a case of a man talking to a boy but of a fifty-thousand dollar man talking to an individual worth three thousand dollars at the utmost."

"There speaks the arrogance of youth, with the letter of the law on his lips and the spirit of the law absent from his heart. That is the language of a money-making, money-loving age, weighing worth in the scale with dollars. I shall take you, sir, on your own low ground, on the mean commercial basis you have chosen. You say you have acquired this money since you left college. How has it been acquired?"

"Honestly."

"That is a point I am anxious to determine. I ask you for the particulars of the transaction, or series of transactions, by which so much money was accumulated in so short a time."

"I sold to a man who wished to buy and was willing to pay my price, a property which I had previously acquired from another who was equally anxious to sell."

"In what did this property consist?"

"It was a railway franchise."

"How much did you pay for it?"

"I paid one thousand dollars for it, money honestly earned and saved by my partner and myself through engineering work on a proposed line of railway."

"For how much did you sell this franchise?"

"For one hundred and five thousand dollars."

"Whom then did you cheat; the seller or the buyer?"

"Neither. The selling price was fixed by the seller himself; the buying price was fixed by the purchaser."

"Did you know at the time you bought that you would *be able to sell at* so greatly enhanced a price?"

"Yes, sir."

"As an honest man, you, of course, told the person from whom you bought, the price at which you were to resell?"

"Certainly not. It was none of his business."

"Then you deliberately, I won't say purchased from, but overreached a man at the rate of less than a cent on the dollar, and so came into possession of an article regarding the true value of which he was under a delusion; came into the possession of it as a fence comes into the possession of purloined goods?"

"I bought at the price he asked; to do as you suggest would be to put an end to all commercial transactions."

The old man rose slowly to his feet, and McAllister recognised in his steely eyes the look of stern condemnation under which he had so often quailed in college.

"I ask you, sir, to leave my house, and never again to enter it. I withdraw the probation term of five years that I offered while I was still under some misapprehension regarding your character. I ask you not to communicate with me again, unless to inform me that you have restored every penny of that money to the man you so shamefully cheated."

McAllister rose also, his face white and his lips trembling. "Then, sir, you not only judge, but you condemn and punish."

"God condemns and punishes all such chicanery as you have just confessed to me."

The young man replied with a calmness that was plainly enforced; the reply of a man resolved not to be angered. "We seem to have reached a deadlock, Mr. Fraser. I am very sorry, and any unwarranted remark of mine that has helped to bring it about I unhesitatingly withdraw and apologise for. May I suggest that we call Mrs. Fraser to this conference, and listen to what she may have to say?"

"There is no conference; it is ended."

"Mrs. Fraser has quite as much interest in the welfare of her daughter as you can have, and ought to be allowed

a voice in a crisis which so seriously affects that welfare."

"I am the head of my household, and whoever proposes to deal with it must deal through me."

"Very well, sir."

McAllister took up the hat he had laid down on entering, and left the room and the house. There was in his face the expression of a man temporarily defeated but far from baffled. He went direct to the nearest livery stable, and there hired a horse and covered buggy. With this he drove the two miles and a half over sandy roads that lay between Stormboro and the schoolhouse where Constance Fraser taught. That lovely autumn afternoon the familiar building lay embowered in splendour. The woods which framed it were brilliant in their tints of scarlet, gold and russet, but Ben had no eye for their beauty. He tied the horse to the rail fence by the side of the road, and, going to the open door, knocked at the lintel to announce his coming. The educational murmur at once ceased; the teacher rose at her desk, crimsoning like forest foliage. McAllister walked up the aisle and shook hands with her, realising now, when it was too late, that he should have restrained his impatience until the pupils had been dismissed. However, there was no chance of retreat, so he took the chair designated by the mistress of ceremonies, facing some dozens of eager boys and girls, who looked upon him as the usual school visitor, and were ready to conjugate for him the verb "to love" if he desired to have them do so.

"Senior class in arithmetic come forward," said the teacher, with such calmness as she could hastily summon to her assistance. In the noise of the shuffling feet and the ringing of slates that ensued Ben whispered to her:

"Constance, dismiss the school as soon as you can. I have something very important to say to you."

"That is impossible. Why didn't you wait till four o'clock, or send me word that you were coming? You must hear the classes now. Children," she continued, addressing the assembled class, "this gentleman has come *to visit us, hoping* you have been getting on well with

your studies. He will set some problems to you, and I hope you can give him correct answers."

With this she sat down at her desk, assuming the air of one who washed her hands of all further responsibility. McAllister faced the expectant youngsters, with an uneasy smile on his lips; still, he was too recently removed from scholastic thrallment himself to be entirely nonplussed by the situation which confronted him.

"A man in New York," he began, "has fifty-two thousand dollars in the bank, drawing four per cent. interest."

There was a quick rattle of pencil on slate as these interesting particulars were jotted down. "How much will he have to add to the sum now in the bank to make his income equal to his present principal?"

"That's too hard," complained the youngster at the foot of the class, unused to interest problems in exactly this form.

"Oh, no, it isn't," replied the amateur school inspector; "at least it isn't so difficult as the task which confronts the New York man I speak of. It ought to be easier to figure up how much money is required than to make that money and put it into the bank."

The hand of the clock had already passed the hour of four when the arithmetic class returned from the front, like a victorious army, and took its place in the body of the community, but the teacher with a relentlessness that reminded the unfortunate visitor of her father, called up class after class, saying that it was not often they had the pleasure of receiving a visitor competent to examine them. At last, however, school was dismissed, the pupils disappeared in their several directions and the tired, impatient man turned a reproachful glance upon his persecutor, who laughed at his discomfiture.

"I hope you are satisfied, Connie," he said.

"I shall be, when you write a commending notice of your inspection in our visitor's book."

"Oh, you have a visitor's book? No, my autograph shall never ornament it. But really, Constance, the position is very serious. I had a terrible interview with your

father this afternoon, and he practically ordered me out of the house, commanding me never again to attempt communication with any member of his family. So you see, my darling, the last word has to be said by you."

"The last word?" echoed the girl, whitening a little at the lips.

"Constance, I am now in a position to marry. The money I possess, even at the rate of interest the bank allows, will give us an income of more than two thousand dollars a year, while at the rates going out west, with perfectly good security, we could get double that, or more; yet I realise that this is only the beginning of the fight, for I am determined to found some large business, and in this coming struggle I want you by my side. What is the use of my working away in New York all alone, and you toiling here in Illinois for a mere pittance? Is it unreasonable that I wish the girl who has promised to marry me to keep her promise, now that I am able, financially, to satisfy the most exacting of parents?"

"No, Ben, it is not unreasonable. What did father say?"

"Say! What didn't he say? It isn't any use going over that. He is prejudiced against me, and always will be. I resolved, for your sake, to keep my temper while I talked with him, and I think I succeeded as well as could be expected. At first he proposed that I should come to him five years from now, but he afterward withdrew that, and told me to go."

"Why?"

"Because the more he knew of me the less he approved of me. But I don't want to say anything about the miserable interview. I want to forget it."

"Did you see mother?"

"No. The house seemed to be empty. I asked to see her—to have her join our conference—but he would not allow it. He was master in his own house, he said, or words to that effect."

The girl had been listening pensively, her cheek resting on her open hand, her elbow on the desk lid. Now she *straightened herself* up, and her lips tightened.

"What do you want me to do, Ben?" she asked quietly.

"Connie, dear, I want you to come with me now. I have a buggy outside, and we can drive on to Selbourn, where we will get married. Jim is waiting for us there?"

"Monro? Why, what has he to do with it?"

"Well, you see, my dear, I asked him to come on west with me from New York. If we had been married from your home, as I hoped, Jim would have been best man. You don't object to Jim, do you, Connie?"

"No-o-o," she replied in rather an unconvincing tone. "But I cannot go with you now, Ben. I must see my mother first. I must go home once more."

"My dear girl, believe me, it won't do the least good to see anyone till we are married. If you make a confidante of your mother she will never consent. She would undoubtedly tell your father, and then he would prevent you going off with me. I know you hate this sort of thing; so do I, but I recognise there is no help for it; none at all, I assure you."

"I must go home once more," repeated the girl with quivering lips. "I cannot have mother watching anxiously for me, as perhaps she is doing now. I must put my arms round her once more, even if I say nothing of what I intend to do."

"But you will be sure to tell her if you return, Connie. Come with me now. We can drive right back from Selbourn."

"No, I must go home first."

"If you do, Connie, it's all up with me, and I may as well take the first train to New York. If you think of making any appeal to your father, I assure you it is quite useless. You do not understand at what a deadlock we arrived."

"Listen to me, Ben. I shall go home at once and have a talk with mother, but will say nothing about going away with you, deceitful daughter that I am. In truth, if my father should make objection to our marriage on the ground that I am not good enough for you, that I am deceitful and desperately wicked, there would be more

reason in his attitude than I can find in it now. I shall also tell my father that I am determined to marry you. If I find the situation as hopeless as you imagine it to be, then, Ben, come for me with your buggy at midnight, and I will go with you. You see how much worse my proposition is than your own, for now we should at least go away in broad daylight, so my present unfilial resolution ought to be a warning to you. O dear, O dear, how can I speak so flippantly about so serious an action? But really, Ben, I am not feeling at all flippant. My heart is sore that I must do such a thing, and Ben, dear Ben, you must see that I love you better than all the world beside!"

"O you sweet, darling girl, to say so. May I ever prove worthy of your love. I will; I will; if I accomplish nothing else in the world."

He put his arms round her and kissed her, while she cried just a little, and scolded herself for doing it, saying that in truth she was the happiest girl at that moment in all the wide world.

CHAPTER V

"WHEN DID YOU LOSE YOUR DAUGHTER?"

THE bells in the tower of the college were chiming twelve when McAllister drove slowly along the side of the street opposite the dark house in which Professor Fraser lived. He had been warned not to arrive there before midnight, as his loitering might attract the attention of passing wayfarers, or an inquisitive policeman, so Ben had whiled away the slow-footed hours by allowing the horse to take its own way through the suburbs, and thus he made the murky acquaintance of the outlying town with a thoroughness that had been absent even from his collegiate days. Now the hour and the man were at the appointed place, and the man, keeping outside the radius of the gas lamp at the corner, watched the door of the two-storied cottage with eager anxiety.

It was perhaps a quarter after the hour when the door opened and closed without sound, leaving the girl standing hesitating on the stoop. She had a small satchel in her hand, which showed that all efforts towards a reconciliation with her father had been unavailing, and the young man's heart beat high as he saw this token of her abandonment of home. It had been arranged that if her father had given even a reluctant consent, meeting a determination equal to his own, she would steal out and let her lover know, so that he might not wait uselessly. Now the little platform with its two steps in front of the closed door seemed to hold her irresolute feet, as if she found it impossible to leave irrevocably the threshold of her father's house. Ben drove his horse quietly across the street and drew up his vehicle at the edge of the board sidewalk. The girl descended the steps quickly, opened the gate and stepped silently into the buggy beside him.

He drove off without a word, through the sleeping town. Once outside the city limits, with the dark country before them, he attempted to put his arm round her, but she shrank from him, shuddering.

"Don't, don't!" she gasped with a sob in her throat. "This is too awful!"

"It was the only thing to do, Connie."

"Perhaps. Perhaps it was the only thing to do, but I should have told my mother. It is an inhuman thing to leave her like this without a word. She, at least, was not to blame."

"That, too, was the only thing to do, believe me, Connie. Had you told her your father would certainly have learned of our intentions, and he would have stopped us if he could. We will send her word the instant we are married. She will not really have a moment's anxiety, for if she finds you missing in the morning she will merely think you have risen early and gone out. She knows, of course, how troubled you have been over this."

"I should have told her; I should have told her!" wailed the girl, evidently as near the verge of hysterics as a sensible woman can be. Ben was not wise enough to keep silence. He had a masculine belief in the advisability of convincing the brain where the heart alone was concerned, and he thought this was a time for logic.

"If you had told her, Connie, it would simply have meant a row and a scandal instead of this quiet departure. You will see later that you have done the best—in fact the only thing."

"Oh, the scandal is but postponed, to break, when it comes, on her lone head. Think of the morning; of the grief, of the publicity, the inevitable publicity, and indeed no one can loathe that more than my father, stubborn as he is. I am entitled to what every girl of my acquaintance has had, or will have; a wedding from a father's house, amidst friends and relatives, respectable, as it should be. Instead of this, I steal away in the night, like a thief—"

"But Connie, darling, that isn't our fault." The *girl went on* without heeding him.

"And then the gossip, the whispering, the shaking of heads; the number of people who always knew Constance Fraser would do something of this sort. Ran away with a man! At midnight! *Said* to have been married, and they sincerely hope for the sake of the parents that this is true. The doubt expressed in nod and intonation. Oh, it is horrible, horrible!"

"Dearest Connie, do listen to reason. What are all those people to us? We shall not live among them, nor care for their trivial opinions, good or bad. They are but a minute, infinitesimal section of a very large world, and a section we shall have nothing to do with in the future. A year from now you won't give a snap of your fingers for the opinion of all Stormboro, and will wonder that you ever had a moment's uneasiness about it."

"Worst of all, the newspapers. How they will gloat over it and put great headings above their accounts of it! 'Elopement of a Professor's Daughter!' I can see the words before me now in the dark. 'A College Scandal!' Their interviews and their comments, keeping it up day after day."

"Dear Connie, that won't hurt us, even if it should all happen just as you say, although it is more than likely that nobody will know anything about it. Why should they? Neither your father nor your mother will say anything. In fact, I can see in my mind's eye a line in the paper, supposing there was an account. 'The professor rudely repulses our reporter and orders him out of the house.'"

"O Ben, how can you speak jestingly about what is a tragedy to me? How can you be so cruel at such a moment?'

"Now you are unjust, Connie. I'm not jesting and I'm not cruel. I'm merely trying to get you to take a common-sense view of the situation."

"Common sense? And then to think that all my life, my husband, if he should get angry with me, as he is now, will have the right to say I was so anxious to marry him that I *proposed* running away with him, and did run away

with him at midnight! If you ever taunt me with this, Ben, I shall leave you."

"O my dear, dear girl, you take the wrong point of view. It would be more truthful to say that I was so anxious to get you that I carried you off in spite of yourself, for I really believe, if I were to allow it, you would turn back."

"Of course, Ben, you think I am silly, but you don't understand me."

"I don't think anything of the kind, Constance."

"But you've practically said so, just now, and I suppose you are right, for I never could have consented to an escapade like this, if I had any wisdom."

The bewildered young man now kept silent, and that at the wrong time. He should have contradicted her, but as he didn't she took her worst fears as proven and wept silently beside him. They were now approaching the schoolhouse, and Ben mentally wished they were safely past it.

"How can you say it will be kept quiet, when there are the school-children who will assemble to-morrow morning and wait and wait for the teacher who never comes? The dear little children, all of whom loved me, and whom I love with all my heart in return. Who is to tell them they are not to think or speak of me again? I see some of the larger girls running to our house, fearing I am ill, and then what is my poor, distracted mother to say to them? Ah, what, what? Ben, I cannot, cannot do it. Stop the horse, Ben, stop, or I shall jump from the buggy."

They were now directly in front of the schoolhouse, concealed in the darkness by the overhanging forest. McAllister pulled up the horse and brought the vehicle to a standstill.

"There is no need to threaten to do this or that, Constance. I am here to help you get out of the buggy, if that is your wish, or to do anything else you may require of me."

"Oh, yes, yes, Ben; you are so good and patient," said *the girl repentantly.* "I'm sorry I am so foolish, but

don't you see that what we proposed is wicked and impossible?"

"I don't see it, Connie, but it is quite enough that you see it. Do you wish me to turn back?"

"Yes, dear Ben. Don't be harsh with me, Ben."

McAllister turned the uncomplaining horse to the right about, and headed once more towards Stormboro. The animal possessed all the patience of a seasoned livery-stable hack, and betrayed neither astonishment nor resentment at the many vagaries of which it had been the victim since nightfall. Ben, however, did not drive on.

"Constance," he said, solemnly, "you have spoken of the love of your mother for you, and the love of the school-children for you, of the opinions of sensational newspapers and the chatter of irresponsible gossips, but in all your talk there has never been a word of me, and apparently not a thought have you given to my feelings, and I certainly love you more than all the school-children combined."

"Oh, how can you say that, Ben, when the thought of you has never been absent from my mind, or the love of you from my heart. Is it wrong that I should wish you to wed your wife honourably, and in the open day, not surreptitiously, like an evildoer?"

"Then will you tell me how you propose to bring about this open-day marriage? Or is it your intention to bid good-bye to me half an hour from now at your father's door, and then put me forever from your mind?"

"O dear Ben! But I don't wonder you are impatient with me. Still, you are very unkind."

"It is you who are unkind, Constance. But this is no time for reproaches. It is a serious crisis in our affairs, and I am confident that if I once place you in your father's house again you will never be my wife. I want one more chance. Have you the schoolhouse key in your pocket?"

The girl patted her dress impulsively in the region where the pocket was supposed to be.

"Why, yes," she exclaimed, half laughing, half crying. "*I had* forgotten all about it. I must leave it in *the lock, of* course."

"Lock yourself in the schoolroom for an hour, Connie. You will be quite safe there until I return. Are you afraid of being alone in the dark, dear?"

"Oh, no. But what are you going to do, Ben?"

"I shall tell you when I come back victorious, or defeated. Meanwhile, you think quietly over the situation, and when I return it will be to give you the choice of going with me to Selbourn or taking up your old life at Stormboro. You shall decide finally, but if I succeed, that hard decision will not be put upon you, so pray for my success."

"I'll do whatever you say, Ben, and God be with you."

She sprang lightly from the buggy before he could assist her, ran to the schoolhouse, and Ben hearing the door shut, drove off to Stormboro. He tied the horse to the maple tree in front of the professor's house, and entered the hall, the door having been left unfastened. He was about to knock on the hall table, but in groping for it a chair fell over with a crash, which resounded like thunder through the silent house.

"Who's there?" came in startled tones from the upstairs; the voice of the professor. Ben cleared his throat as he heard a match struck, and saw the flare of a gas light in the upper hall.

"Who's there? What is it?"

"Benjamin McAllister," the young man found voice to say.

"What are you doing here, sir? Have you added house-breaking to your many avocations?"

The old man appeared at the top of the stairway, a dressing-gown flung round him, a candle in his hand, which threw into relief his stern, gaunt face and straggling grey hair. Mrs. Fraser followed him, and placed her hand on his arm.

"Do not speak so loudly," she whispered, fear shining from eyes red from weeping.

"Peace, woman," said the professor savagely, shaking off her hand. "Peace, that we may learn what this rascally night prowler has to say in defence of his burglarious intrusion. Now, that you have been so opportunely

discovered, how did you break into this house, malefactor?"

"I did not break in; I came in by the open door, through which your daughter escaped, an hour ago, from under your tyrannous roof."

McAllister, looking up, saw a grey shadow of anguish pass over the old man's face, and for the first time was sorry for him.

"My daughter! Escaped!" he gasped, while the candlestick visibly trembled in his hand. Mrs. Fraser uttered a cry, which was quickly followed by a sob. She ran instantly to her daughter's room.

"O Constance! Constance!" she wailed in accents of agony, "say, say that it is not true. My own little girl, my baby!" but the empty room, the unpressed bed confronted her. "O John, John, she is not here: she has gone, she has gone; our darling has gone!" she cried wildly. They heard her throw herself on the tenantless bed, moaning and sobbing.

"And you, sir," spoke the old man, his voice so husky as to be scarcely recognisable, "have you come to this shamed house to taunt us with the disgrace of which you are the cause?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Fraser. You are the cause. I have come to say that if you will listen to reason there will be no disgrace. Your daughter will return within an hour if you will but promise that we may marry from this house, a promise she pleads for, and one she has every right to expect."

"I shall rouse the police. I will search the town for her. You shall not profit by your knavery."

"You may do all that, Mr. Fraser, if you wish to be hooted in derision from the city, and your name made a byword and a scandal in your college. If you in your folly do as you threaten, then your daughter and myself will be far beyond the reach of you and your police. I have a horse and buggy at the door, and if you make a move in the direction you indicate I shall be off before you can cry out to the empty street. No one but myself knows where Constance is at the present moment, and

she will stay there until I return to her. Neither you nor all the police in Stormboro can find her, unless I lead you to her hiding place."

The weeping, distracted mother now came to the head of the stair, imploring the young man to bring her daughter back to her home.

"I merely await your consent, Mrs. Fraser. Indeed, I am most reluctant to cause you the slightest distress, and Constance is heartbroken to leave you in this way. She is eager to return, if she may have the birthright which every other girl receives without question; the privilege of marrying the man of her choice in church, or in her father's house. It is shameful that this right should be denied her for one moment, and that I should be compelled to sue for it."

"Yes, Ben, it is shameful," cried Mrs. Fraser, whose exasperation now got the better of the dread of her husband. "John, Constance shall be married in her own home as I was married from my father's house."

The old professor leaned against the wall and groaned. He tried to rally his forces and said with a feeble attempt at his usual manner.

"Silence, woman. I will not be coerced by a trick."

"I have been silent too long, and there will be an end of silence if you continue your stubbornness. Is Constance not my daughter as well as yours? And is the happiness of both to be sacrificed because you are displeased?"

The silence demanded was now maintained by the professor.

"I am waiting for your answer, sir," said McAllister, but the old man made no reply.

"Come with me," coaxed Mrs. Fraser, placing her hand on her husband's arm. "Ben, you must wait for me. If he does not consent I am going in the buggy with you to Constance. She shall be married with her mother, at least, beside her."

"All right, Mrs. Fraser, that is a capital idea; that is all Constance desires."

Mrs. Fraser led her husband away unresisting. He

seemed dazed by the turn things had taken. Ben lit the gas in the hall and waited. In a short time there appeared at the top of the stair alone his future mother-in-law, for whom he had that affection which most men hold for their mothers-in-law, despite the paragraphs to the contrary in the humourous press.

"Ben," she said, "go and fetch Constance. I shall wait up till your return."

"But does he consent?" urged Ben, who did not relish the chance of a last condition that would be worse than the first.

"Yes; you may take my word for it, Ben."

"But I should like to hear him say so," persisted the suspicious young man.

"He won't say so. Don't press him. Let well alone."

"He *will* say so," cried the contrary professor from the room above. "He is not ashamed to put in words whatever conclusion is forced upon him. You shall be married from this house, but you will not receive my blessing on a union which has its origin in a breach of the commandment. The day will come when she will desert her husband as she now deserts her father."

Ben was about to reply that the blessing was a boon they could doubtless dispense with, but Mrs. Fraser, arriving by intuition at the threatened rejoinder, held up her finger in admonition, and Ben simply said:

"I thank you, sir."

Mrs. Fraser ran down the stairs and silently threw her arms round the young man's neck.

"O Ben, Ben," she whispered with tremulous voice, "you'll be good to my darling, you'll be good to her, won't you?"

Ben kissed her and found difficulty in bracing his unsteady voice to reply:

"If I am not, mother, may God deal his harshest with me."

CHAPTER VI

"GIVE ME LEAVE TO PROVE YOU A FOOL"

"DEAR JIM:

"What are you fooling away your time in Selbourn for? It's a town of no interest or importance. Come at once to Stormboro, which is an educational centre and a city of delight. What put an elopement into your head? Certainly not! We are to be married at her father's house day after to-morrow (Thursday) by the Reverend Dean of the Faculty himself, Professor Fraser assisting. You've mooned round Selbourn so much alone that you have imbibed erroneous notions of things. I confess it isn't very complimentary that you should imagine all sorts of objections to me as a son-in-law. I told you in North Carolina there would be no trouble. Consent? Of course everybody consents. Why shouldn't they? The idea of a justice of the peace! What a fertile imagination you have, Jimmy. Connie never would agree to be married before a justice, and, for that matter, neither should I; my future father-in-law, the professor, would have been aghast at such a suggestion, I am sure. Come on to Stormboro at once, Jimmy; there's to be two stunningly pretty bridesmaids. I'll meet you at the 10.15.

"Ever yours,

"BEN."

CHAPTER VII

"FORTUNE'S FURIOUS FICKLE WHEEL"

UNLESS the necessary flitting to New York could be regarded as a wedding journey, the McAllisters, newly married, had none. Ben was, above all things, practical, and he was not going to begin an untried phase of existence by making any mistakes. The ceremony, which, to the romantic mind of the girl, had seemed to be the most important event in her life, was to him but an inevitable episode, happily done with, and now their career together began.

On the night of the relinquished elopement he had promised Mrs. Fraser that he would be a good husband to her daughter, and this pledge was in line with his own long-held, well-thought-out intention. He would not only be a good husband, but the best husband in the world. His rule of conduct was already clear to him. No harsh word would ever be spoken to his wife. His life would be devoted to her service; she would yet be the richest woman in New York. Never should she know the uncertainty of a hand-to-mouth subsistence. Ben himself had been so poor in worldly goods that the possession of unlimited means appeared the most desirable thing in the world, a condition to be striven for with all the energy at one's disposal, and he had a text to quote from Scripture giving to the scheme the strong support of biblical sanction, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Happiness was thus foreshadowed for Constance McAllister, who was now in possession of a husband determined to achieve, the fruit of that achievement hers, and hers alone. His devotion was dominated by all the enthusiasm of an ancient

knight for his lady, but with the nonsense eliminated. He was the embodiment of nineteenth century chivalry, eminently rational.

Monro was at the station to see them off for New York, wishing them a safe and pleasant journey.

"But aren't you coming with us?" cried Ben in amazement.

"No, I'm going to Chicago," replied Jim. "I want to spend a day or two there. Then I'll take the Limited to New York."

"Nonsense," said Ben emphatically. This was the first he had heard of such an absurd proposal. "You have nothing to do in Chicago. I want to talk with you over our plans."

"Oh, there will be time enough for that," rejoined his friend, with eyes on the ground. "I expect to pick up some hints in Chicago that may be useful to us."

"Chicago!" ejaculated Ben with great contempt. "What can Chicago teach us? Look at the difference in population. New York's the spot. Come along, Jim. Why, think of the time we'll have on the cars together. We can plan enough between here and New York to—Of *course* you'll come. Connie, tell him we want him with us."

Constance was smiling faintly and looking at Jim, who did not meet her gaze. She joined in her husband's invitation, but with exceeding mildness. Ben glanced from one to the other in bewilderment. He could not understand Jim's quietly stubborn resolve, nor Connie's lack of cordiality. It was the most natural thing in the world for Monro to accompany them; there were innumerable business points to be settled—important affairs that had been already thrust too completely in the background by the excitement preceding the wedding. But now the marriage ceremony was over and done with. It belonged to the past. This was the time to discuss the future; all three equally interested. And here was a heaven-sent opportunity, the long, long pilgrimage to New York, with absolutely nothing else to do but talk business.

"Come, you two," commanded Monro. "Get your seats or you'll miss the train. I've seen to the baggage. I gave you the checks, didn't I, Ben?"

"Yes, yes, but look here—"

"Good-bye, Ben. Good-bye, Mrs. McAllister. Does the name sound unfamiliar? You'll soon get used to it. See you later, both of you." Jim shook hands and turned away. He did not go to Chicago, but took the evening train for New York.

McAllister wondered what was wrong with Monro. Surely he did not think that marriage was to make any difference in their close comradeship. That would be too absurd. Jim himself might marry before long, and their wives would be great friends. As the train sped along Ben unfolded his ambitions to Constance, regretting Jim's absence now and then, for numerous problems presented themselves that would have been the better for Monro's calm common sense directed upon them. All this was, of course, exceedingly interesting to Mrs. McAllister. Ben's enthusiasm was infectious, but presently she began to gaze wistfully from the car window, listening, nevertheless. The scenery was not attractive; a flat country with villages and towns very like one another; but it was the kind of prospect to which she had been accustomed all her life.

When New York was reached she could not tell whether she liked it or not. The roar and bustle dazed her. It seemed to inspire Ben, who glowed in eulogy of the place. To him the commotion was the tumult of battle, into which he was eager to plunge, confident that he would emerge a Napoleon.

Their abiding place was the "Arundel," on Madison Avenue, partly a boarding-house, partly a private hotel, but without the appearance of a place of public entertainment. There was no signboard above the door, and nothing to indicate that it was not an ordinary dwelling. It was six stories high, with a plain front of dark brown stone. A flight of steps led up to the front door; with all the seeming of an entrance to a private mansion,

which, indeed, the house originally had been. The premises adjoining belonged also to the Arundel, with doorways cut between on each landing. There was a bogus air of personal occupancy about the place, and a hint of home comfort, a surreptitious pretense that a boarder was not a boarder, but a friend of the family. The thick foot-worn carpets and much of the heavy furniture had been taken over from the former proprietor, to be supplemented by incongruous modern garnishings constructed by machinery.

The McAllisters occupied a suite of three small rooms on the fourth floor facing the avenue, and from one or other of the windows Constance gazed pensively out at the opposite side of the street, much as she had gazed from the car speeding to New York, while Ben had talked glowingly of what he would accomplish in business.

An attempt had been made in the arrangement of the dining-room to give an effect of semi-exclusiveness for the benefit of those eccentric enough to desire this sort of thing. The large front room contained two long tables, and here at stated hours the majority of the boarders, men and women, congregated. Closed folding doors in a wide archway separated the big apartment from a smaller back room furnished with little round tables for two, and larger square tables for four. The service here was not so prompt as in the more popular division, but the majority treasured this room as being one of the homelike features of the place, although they never occupied it. Others, again, valued the presence of the portly woman (who was proprietor of the establishment) at the head of the table, whose large, genial attitude of hostess presiding at a country house gathering had so much to do with the feeling that one was accepting hospitality rather than receiving goods paid for at the end of the week. The manager of the Fifth Avenue hotel did not sit down with his "guests" nor know each one by name.

A standing witticism in the comic papers leads to the

inference that boarding-house steak is tough and scanty, but both Mrs. Hammond and her patrons could laugh at these recurring jokes without feeling their personal application. The food was lavish and well cooked, excellent in quality, but in somewhat too great variety for much distinction to rest with any one dish.

Constance preferred a little round table in the smaller room, where she and Ben might be alone at their meals. Of course it could have been arranged to breakfast, lunch, and dine in one of their own rooms, but this would have entailed extra cost, while even now the bill paid at the end of each week appalled the girl with its extravagance. Ben objected to the plan because of the slowness of the service, and every minute was of value to him. Breakfast was hurried through, luncheon he never attended, and dinner he rarely indulged in, coming home late at night, when he had to let himself in with a latch-key.

Sometimes on the infrequent occasions when he came to dinner a burst of laughter from the long tables penetrated the closed doors, and Ben would look up with an appreciative smile, for he loved his fellow-man and liked to think of every one as happy. Were he ruler of the world all its inhabitants would have been joyous, could his wish make them so. His deeply seated religious feeling had nothing sombre in it. "Connie," he cried once, "we ought to be in there. They're a jolly lot. Don't you think you'd enjoy that better than sitting here mooning with me?"

"No," answered his wife.

"Why? You ought to get acquainted with people. We've been here for months, and I don't believe you know a soul in the place."

"Do you?"

"Oh, with me it's different. I'm busy. I've no time for that sort of thing. But you have all the time there is on your hands, and it would be ever so much livelier for you if you were on visiting terms with some of them. Don't the folks here know each other? They seem to be very *friendly in there.*"

"Yes, they know each other. Mrs. Hammond offered to introduce me to some of the 'permanents,' as she calls them. Humanity is divided into two classes in her mind, the permanents and the transients, the former being worthy of all consideration. The women visit a good deal in each other's rooms, and I believe much gossip is interchanged. Some have called on me, but I think they regard me as countryfied."

"Nonsense; you just imagine that."

"I'm afraid I'm not interested in them or their conversation, which is chiefly of dress or the theatres, or surmises concerning the relations of some of the transients, and even of the permanents."

"Say, Connie, you speak cynically. I never heard you do that before."

Constance, in defiance of etiquette, placed her elbows on the table and her chin in her hands, looking earnestly across at him.

"O Ben," she said in a low voice, "give me a place as shop-girl in your store."

The good-natured man leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. This was a rare joke.

"My dear girl, you underrate the American husband. He wants his wife to be queen among women, and my wife shall be so, and not a slave, while I have brains and energy to order it otherwise. The shop-girls are working for you, my dear, and I hope some day to have a thousand of them. I tell you what it is, Connie, you should take up some study that would interest you. Music, for instance. I'll have a piano sent up to our rooms."

"A piano! Who could play in this hive? I'm driven distracted by the pianos I can hear now. There is one in the room adjoining, set against the wall—I loathe it—another down the passage and one in the room above."

"Well, start opposition, which is the life of trade. However, I only make the suggestion. All New York is at your disposal. By Jove, I must be off," he added, looking at his watch. "Well, ta, ta, my girl."

"Must you go, Ben? Surely you don't have to work both night and day."

Ben laughed his cheery, confident laugh.

"That's the price of success in New York," he said. "By-and-by, when I get the business more firmly established, I shall not be kept so hard at it. Monro puts in even longer hours than I do."

He glanced at his watch again, snapped it shut, and was gone.

Often he talked with her about the business; in fact it was the only subject on which he could converse with ardour; nothing else seemed of moment to him.

Jim's money and his had been put into an establishment on Sixth Avenue. He had a theory that, on the whole, the people of New York were badly served. Their clothes, their boots, their hats were for the most part made of shoddy and rated at high prices. Their food was adulterated and they were cheated in weight. The motto of the new firm was "Honesty." The "small profits and quick returns" idea of the adage was to be carried out in reality. He would pay cash and exact cash. There would be no accounts on either credit or debit side of his ledger, if, indeed, he kept a ledger at all. He would gain the confidence of the ready-money buyers of New York, and it was his ambition that the time would come when if a man said such an article was purchased from McAllister, Monro & Co., that statement would be a guarantee of its quality. He hoped to enlarge and re-enlarge his premises, absorbing, one after another, the adjoining shops, and when this was accomplished he expected to erect a building that would be a model to the world. He had chanced on the germ of an idea, the idea of the department store; a huge commercial Juggernaut that would crush out local opposition and ruin the small dealer, an idea against which future legislatures were to make laws, an idea destined to bring untold wealth to its promoters and unmitigated curses upon their heads.

"I tell you what it is, Connie," he exclaimed, "I will

be at the head of a vast emporium in which any woman may get whatever she wants without going from under our roof," and he emphasised his statement by a sweeping gesture, as if to typify the immensity of feminine desires.

"Then I shall go there, Ben."

"Of course you will, and you'll get what you want, too, at the right price for the right quality."

"What I shall want will be my husband, for I think the price I am paying is too much."

"For the quality, eh?" laughed Ben as he kissed her. He was a hopelessly good-natured man.

CHAPTER VIII

"I DO DESIRE SOME CONFIDENCE"

IT is not easy to gain the confidence of a large city. There are many competitors, and you must let the inhabitants know that you are in the running. This means advertising, and advertising means money generously spent, with faith in its return increased a thousand-fold. It is all very well to do a cash business if you have sufficient capital, but McAllister, Monro & Co. soon found that they must husband their resources and take credit where they could get it. Before a year had passed the firm was in difficulties. Ben had many glowing schemes on which he would have staked everything, confident of success, but Jim was more conservative, acting as a balance wheel to the concern, subduing Ben's enthusiasm without dampening his ardour. Both worked to the utmost of their capacity, indulging in no vacations.

To the ordinary man the unexpected direction which McAllister's ventures sometimes took would have been disconcerting, but Monro had an inexhaustible faith in his partner's genius, a quality entirely unlike his own more plodding methods, and Jim would carry patiently to its conclusion some brilliant proposal which had been completely forgotten by its projector, after it had been uttered with such force of eloquence as to impress it indelibly on Monro's mind.

The need of money had to become acute before it crossed the line which limited the range of McAllister's attention. He was in the habit of waving a crisis aside with the remark that Jim would attend to the matter, for his belief in Monro's power to surmount obstacles was only equalled by the latter's confidence in the potentiality

of Ben's scintillating suggestions. Once brought up against the stone wall of financial embarrassment, however, McAllister with tireless enrgy, backed by fervent prayer, set himself resolutely at the task of climbing over or finding a way round. It was astonishing how often he averted impending disaster. His certainty of himself and belief in his proposals were so overwhelming that he seemed to hypnotise the money from the most unlikely sources. If a man listened he must end by being convinced, and if he had the cash it changed pockets. When McAllister reached the point where despair set in, his puritanical fervour bore him up, and his unshaken assurance that the Lord was associated with him tided over many a depth in which another man would have sunk.

Sometimes the remedy which McAllister applied for reducing these constantly recurring commercial fevers was so ridiculously inadequate, not to say incongruous, that Monro was aghast, confronting some elusive course of reasoning which he could not grasp. An example of this was the advent of Edward Holderness, stupefying to Monro at the time, but by him admitted later to have been a master stroke, a conclusion which McAllister had never for a moment doubted.

One morning Ben left the store after a serious consultation with his partner, grievously depressed. Five hundred dollars must be produced before closing time, and the bank account of the firm was overdrawn. Ben had no more idea where he was to get the money than the man who urged him to buy unneeded lead pencils in the street. He saw neither that man nor any other as he walked the crowded pavement, for his mind and soul were in urgent communion with One whom he regarded as the chief member of the firm. People ran against McAllister and made comment, sometimes polite, more often sharply the reverse, but Ben paid no heed.

Monro spent an anxious day. He feared the resourcefulness of his friend had come to an end, as, some day, it must, if the efforts of the supply company did not

meet a more substantial appreciation from the public than was at present the case. The constant strain of steering the boat in these turbulent rapids, avoiding the rocks by a hair's breadth, was telling on the nerves of both men.

At three o'clock Monro, from his glass-walled office that overlooked the whole interior of the store, saw his partner enter. McAllister's hat was set on the back of his head, his face was radiant, and the buoyancy of springtime was in his step. He had a smile and a cheery word of greeting for the employees he passed, all of whom liked him and would do anything for him. A gloomy, disheartened man had gone out that morning; a jubilant boy was now returning. He came into the office, his right hand upraised, which he brought down with a resounding clap on the shoulder of his friend.

"Jimmy, my son, I've done the greatest stroke of business to-day that's been pulled off in New York for a year."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Monro, his forebodings scattering like mist before the sun.

"Yes, sir; it takes your uncle Ben to put his finger right on the spot. I was going down Broadway and stopped in front of Cowan's jewelry store. All at once it struck me that old Cowan might want to come in on the new commercial movement and join the procession. He's one of the richest fellows in New York, you know."

"There couldn't be a better man," agreed Jim, warming. "Was he willing?"

"Don't know. Didn't see him. I went in and was met by the floorwalker, as we would call him; what title Cowan gives him I haven't the slightest idea. I expect the man must be a duke. He was the most polite individual I ever encountered; made me feel like a clodhopper beside him. I tell you, Jim, Western colleges should pay more attention to deportment than they do. The business side of pure politeness has never been thoroughly appreciated in this country, and we are apt to underesti-

mate it in foreigners. Now, Jim, you and I are first-class fellows, of course, but beside a man like Holderness of Cowan's, we're uncouth; that's what we are—uncouth."

"Quite so, but what, in Heaven's name, has all that to do with—"

"Wait a moment. I'm coming to the point. This man Holderness thought at first I was a customer. Naturally he was polite. Then he learned I wanted to interview his chief, and after expressing in the most deferential manner that this chief was a very busy person who could see no one unless an appointment had been made, he actually foiled me in my attempt to meet the old gentleman, and did it with a manner so charming that it was a pleasure to be discomfited."

"Then how did you get to the inner office?"

"I have just told you that I didn't get in. No, sir, I didn't get in, and right here came over me a flash of inspiration. I knew there was something we lacked in our store, and up to that moment I had but the vaguest sort of notion what it was."

"We lack cash," interrupted Jim with some severity.

"Oh, yes, but cash is comparatively a minor matter. That will come all right enough. When money begins to flow into this place the Croton dam couldn't keep it out. First tap the reservoir, then run your levels right and the water will come like a flood. Well, as I was saying, I made up my mind right on the spot that we had to have this man. 'What's your name?' I asked him. 'Edward Holderness,' he answered, too cultured to show surprise. 'Look here, Mr. Holderness,' I cried, 'you're my man. I want you and you want me. I have in embryo the greatest business in New York City. It will be a mine of minted gold when this little shop is jogging on in the same old way, glad of making a beggarly hundred thousand a year. You must come with me.' Well, sir, that chap was too highly refined to discuss the matter on his employer's premises. He would make an appointment with me next week, he said. and talk over the scheme. 'Next week!' I shouted. 'Next week may be next cen-

tury as far as we are concerned. I settle things now. When do you lunch?' I asked. 'At one o'clock,' says he. 'All right. Meet me at Delmonico's at one o'clock sharp.' And so I left him. At Delmonico's I gave him the finest lunch that ever was served in this town."

Jim groaned.

"How did you pay for it?" he asked.

"Didn't pay for it. Told them to chalk it up, which they did. They know me there. And I tell you what it is, Jim, when you want a first-class feed and haven't the ready, don't fool round going to a cheap place, trying their most economical dishes. Go to the very best restaurant and order the best they've got, growling because it isn't better. Oh, I understand this village, even if I did come from the West. Well, sir, I just told Holderness what we're going to do with this outfit. Paralysed him. Then, striking while the iron was hot, I asked him what he wanted to join us. It seems they're giving him two thousand five hundred dollars a year at Cowan's, and he asked three thousand to come with us. 'I'll give you five thousand,' said I, and we settled it right there and then."

For once McAllister's enthusiasm proved unavailing. Monro leaned back in his chair, and, without replying, gazed sadly through the glass at the employees scattered about the store, whose wages on the coming Saturday he did not know how to meet. A shade of grey overspread his face. McAllister felt the gathering chill, and rose to his feet, speaking earnestly and emphasising his remarks with eloquent gestures of the right hand.

"I know exactly what you think, Jim. You think it's poor business policy to offer a man five thousand when he's willing to come for three thousand. Now, I want to deal generously with those who are helping me. I want my people to be more than satisfied. The day of the cheap man is past. From now on America is going to have little use for any who are not of the very first class. The man of brains is going to make money; the man of muscle is going to get work, but for the great

commonplace crowd between the two—well, it's in for a bad time."

Still Monro maintained silence.

"And yet I'm cheating Holderness. He's a twenty-five thousand dollar man, and he'll get that from me before I quit. Yes, and by smoke, I'll give him his twenty thousand a year back pay, too; see if I don't. You know, Jim, we are dealing with the women. Women will be our customers and we must please them. It's all nonsense to say that women like your gruff, outspoken person; they don't. They want deference and they want it smooth and suave. You just ought to hear the way Holderness pronounces the word 'madame.' I tell you it's a lesson in elocution. The tone is like velvet and the manner is the incarnation of deepest respect. Why, he'd make a woman from the Bowery think he took her for a duchess. Jim, he will 'madame' us into prosperity. You can't keep the ladies of New York away from this store when Holderness is with us."

There was an interval before Monro spoke.

"I quite agree with you that it is necessary to have a polite floorwalker. I'm glad you've got the right person. How about that other matter?"

"What other matter?"

"The five hundred dollars."

"What five hundred dollars?"

"The money we must have before five o'clock."

"Oh, that! I settled the question going up Sixth Avenue. I couldn't do any business until I got it off my mind."

"I was afraid you had forgotten it, Ben. When is the money to be here?"

"Before five o'clock, of course. That's the hour you mentioned."

"Quite right. How did you raise it?"

"I didn't raise it. I don't know a man in town who'd let me have the money. I said to the Lord as I walked along Sixth Avenue, 'I'm up a tree. We've got to have five hundred dollars at the store before five o'clock.'

Then the weight lifted right off my mind, and I felt like a boy again."

"I wish I shared your feeling," said Monro, grimly.

"I wish you did, Jim," was McAllister's simple reply.

"Do you expect me to meet our creditors—sharp New York business men—and offer them such security?"

"I asked for cash. Didn't you hear what I said?"

Monro felt that the dreaded break had come. He had linked his fortune with insanity; now he must speak plainly and get out of the combination. McAllister gazed anxiously across the table at the averted face of his friend, divining rather than diagnosing the frost in the air, for his intuition was always stronger than his reason. The ballooning bubble of this mixture of business and devotion had collapsed, leaving the stale half-and-half flat to the taste. Ben needed a responsive audience; in the cold atmosphere of doubt his exaltation shrivelled. His sensitive spirit shrank from Monro's incredulous silence, and he sank into his chair suffering from a blow that had not yet fallen.

There was a tap at the office door; a clerk entered.

"A gentleman to see you, Mr. McAllister."

Ben, springing to his feet, grasped at the interruption as an immersed man at a life belt. He spoke breathlessly.

"This is Holderness, Jim. He said he would run over if he could get away. Wants to have a look round, you know. Now, Jim, old man, whatever you think of me, let it go for the moment. Don't give Holderness a hint that there is a difference between us. We'll thrash all that out afterward. You won't say anything now, will you, Jim?"

Monro shook his head. Edward Holderness was brought in by the clerk.

"Ah, Mr. Holderness, I'm glad you found time to visit us. This is my partner, Mr. Monro; the solid man of the concern."

The urbanity of Mr. Holderness in greeting his new employers fully justified the eulogies of McAllister.

"Now we'll have a walk round the premises, for I'm sure you're anxious to be off again," cried Ben, nervously rubbing his hands together.

Monro sat where he was and watched the two thread their way among the long tables piled with goods. The mobile right hand of Ben gesticulated, his round hat was pushed further and further to the back of his head. The froth was boiling up again, now that he had an attentive listener; the place was transforming itself to his prophetic eye into a thronged mart, the commercial retail heart of a great city. Evidently his untiring eloquence brought the vision very vividly to the mind of his visitor, whose bearing showed deferential acquiescence. Monro, out of the influence, sighed deeply.

"Wonderful man," he murmured to himself. "If faith could carry us on, how prosperous we should be!"

Their excursion ended, the two returned to the office. McAllister's eyes glowed after his fever of talk, and the position of his barometric hat showed that his spirits were still at a high level. In convincing others he convinced himself.

"Mr. Holderness quite agrees with me, Jim. We've got everything our own way if we only work it right, and that's exactly what we're going to do."

"The possibilities are certainly most alluring," said the urbane Mr. Holderness. "I'm thoroughly at one with Mr. McAllister in his ideas regarding the treatment of the public, and I feel sure great success will follow."

Monro, with an effort, replied that he hoped such would be the case. Ben glanced timorously from one to the other, a set smile on his lips.

"There are one or two points," continued Mr. Holderness, "which may be mentioned, now that we are all here together. In the first place, I should like to begin with you a little sooner than I anticipated—to-morrow, in fact, if you have no objection."

"The sooner the better," cried McAllister cordially. "Every moment lost is gone forever."

"*Quite so.* I am forced to admit that my late employer

did not take my resignation in the spirit I had expected. He endeavoured to give it the effect of a dismissal, and to that, of course, I made no objection. The dismissal, however, is instant; thus I am prepared to come here at once. This brings me to my second point, which is financial—I hope you will not think I am making conditions, but rather offering suggestions."

"Certainly, certainly," ejaculated Ben, his brow wrinkling in perplexity. Monro said to himself, "He is anxious about his salary—and no wonder."

"Mr. Cowan has many commendable traits in business relation, and his present anger and haste do not blind me to his more intrinsic qualities. He allows his employes to put their savings into the capital of the firm—a most excellent device in my opinion—securing that interest on their part in the success of the establishment which comes from a proprietary holding. My own small investment I should gladly have allowed to remain with him, but he somewhat curtly declined, and drew me a cheque on the spot. It is only seven hundred and eighty-five dollars, but I should feel obliged if you would allow me to take stock in this growing enterprise to that amount, with the privilege of increasing it from time to time."

"I see no objection to that," said McAllister quickly. "Jim, make out a receipt for seven hundred and eighty-five dollars, sign it, and then I'll countersign it. We will issue the stock to you to-morrow, Mr. Holderness, and take up your receipt."

Monro mechanically drew toward himself a long book of blanks, and wrote as he had been directed. Mr Holderness sat down and slowly indorsed a cheque he had taken from his pocket-book, blotted the signature with care and laid the document on the table. McAllister rapidly scrawled his undecipherable sign manual on the paper his partner handed to him. The cheque went into a drawer, and the receipt into a pocket-book Mr. Holderness arose and took his leave with ingratiating amiability.

In the silence that ensued McAllister walked up and

down the room, his eyes gleaming as if a flame had been kindled behind them. In his veins throbbed the Covenanter blood, whose iron had nerved some ancestor to face death unflinching for his faith. When at last he spoke, his voice rang out in the fervid tone of the exhorter, the expressive right hand automatically pushing his hat further back ere it added gesture to speech.

"Ten minutes past four, Jimmy; ten minutes past four! I told you the money would be here. 'A man can receive nothing except it have been given from heaven.' 'Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Write our own cheque for five hundred dollars and see that this draft from Holderness is in the bank as soon as the doors open to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER IX

"A GRACIOUS PERSON"

EDWARD HOLDERNESS found his employer waiting for him when he returned to the jewellery store. Mr. Cowan was not in good temper as he paced up and down the long and broad space between the counters, behind which numerous clerks were ostentatiously busy, some assiduously serving the public, others actively engaged in unnecessary rearrangement of the wares.

"And where have you been, sir?" demanded the chief.

"I took the liberty of visiting the establishment on Sixth Avenue to which I have attached myself."

"Attached yourself! The liberty! Put in plainer language, you stole the time from me."

"Perhaps we had better discuss this in a less conspicuous place, Mr. Cowan. May I suggest your private room, sir?"

"I am not going to discuss anything with you, and if I did it would be when and where I please. The store is mine, I hope."

"Undoubtedly it is, sir."

"Then explain your theft of time, which I pay for."

"During the busy season I have often worked for you extra hours without asking or expecting additional remuneration; I had hoped, therefore, you would perhaps overlook the taking of a few minutes for myself—"

"A few minutes! You might justify in the same way the taking of a few dollars from my till."

"I venture to submit, sir, that the comparison is harsh. Nevertheless, if such is your view, I am anxious that you compensate yourself by a corresponding deduction from my salary."

"Exactly. Always the plea of the detected thief.

The money will be returned if no inconvenient questions are asked."

Edward Holderness contented himself with an inclination of the head. The shopmen were more absorbed in their activities than ever. The master's voice was loud and domineering, and the solf answers he received did not turn away wrath.

" I've had enough of you ; get out, and never set foot on my premises again."

The floorwalker bowed once more, and retired with the gentle tiptoe tread of his profession. He swept one kindly glance at his fellow-labourers as he withdrew, an expression of friendly interest and sympathy so subtle that it could not compromise them with their satrap, yet tangible enough to convey to each an unwhispered valediction. He did not put on his faultlessly glossy silk hat until he was well across the threshold, then he passed up Broadway as properly attired a man as could be found on that well-dressed thoroughfare. In ordinary events he would have taken a car to his modest home in the Harlem district, but now some hours of the afternoon were unexpectedly at his disposal, so where Broadway cut Fifth Avenue he deserted the business street and continued north on the road of fashion, a figure in no way incongruous to its surroundings

Further and further up the town walked this apparent gentleman of leisure, and none who met him could notice outward indication of inward ferment at the contumely heaped upon him by his late employer. His serenity was unruffled, his brow unclouded. At last he came to a district which knew him not, a locality swarming with the poor, but the quiet dignity of that measured walk was in no way relaxed. If any hurried inhabitant jostled against the deliberate pedestrian, he collided with one whose business was a consideration of others, and unexpectedly met a smile where he anticipated a curse.

Nearing his own home Mr. Holderness paused before a shop that displayed, mostly on the pavement, a varie-

gated stock of cheap crockery, the prices marked in large black figures on cardboard or on the dishes themselves. Three pitchers, positive, comparative and superlative in size, attracted his attention.

"I'll take these, if you please," he said to the shopman.

"All right, Mr. Holderness. Have them sent right up as usual, I suppose?"

"If you will be so kind." He paused a moment while the shopman stood expectant. "And I think I'll have two of those large basins, if you have any of them left, the coarse cheap kind, you know."

"Like you had a month ago? Yes, sir, they'll be delivered before you get home."

"Thank you." Holderness paid for his purchases and went slowly onward, the boy with the crockery-filled basket passing him on the way.

The house of Holderness was a semi-detached three-story structure. Its occupier looked at his watch as he approached it. He had timed himself exactly and would reach his door at the customary moment, as if he had taken a car at his usual hour down-town.

As he entered his own hall a strange, oppressive silence brooded over the place, emphasised rather than disturbed by the diminishing swish of a woman's skirts and the quiet, surreptitious shutting of an inner door. To this the man paid no attention. He went up the stairs to his own room and there removed gloves, hat, coat and vest. As those articles of clothing were abandoned one by one, something of the wearer's urbanity departed in their company. Spotless shirt and collar and irreproachable cravat took with them into their retirement a measurable portion of the aroma of civilisation, and at last there stood in the room a primeval savage in coarse trousers belted round the waist, woollen shirt open at the throat. There was a suggestion of the leopard in the way he sprang up the stairs to the third story, three steps at a time. Before the door of a room had been placed the two basins and the three pitchers. Holderness put a key into the lock and turned it. The interior of the attic was a wreck; broken

chairs, a ruined table inclining at an angle of forty-five degrees, two legs gone, the floor covered with shattered earthenware. Some pictures hung against the wall by a corner or a bit of cord. Into this scene of disaster Holderness carried his crockery and closed the door. He looked in vain for any piece of furniture level enough on which to place his new purchase, then, as if in fury at the disappointment, he raised the whole assortment, and dashed it with a crash to the floor, making the house shudder. One pitcher bounded away, miraculously unharmed. A malignant kick sent it against the wall, and its immunity was of the shortest. The noise of destruction seemed to goad the destroyer to frenzy. Placing a foot against the decrepit table, he wrenched off one remaining leg from its socket and laid about him with vigour, hissing through his clenched teeth the language of the slums, mingled with the name of Cowan. The unfortunate table for the moment appeared to personify the celebrated dealer in gems, and on that the assailant expended his fury until the wooden cudgel splintered in his hands. Half an hour of this exercise brought its result. Holderness stood over the fragments with heaving chest and perspiration pouring down his face. The reprehensible language ceased as the muscular activity waned, and silence rested once more upon the stricken house. As he stood panting, leaning against the wall, there came up to him the pleasant sound of pouring water. He swept the moisture from his brow, went out, locked the door behind him and stole softly down the stairs to the bath-room, where unseen hands had set the taps going. He emerged from the water a giant refreshed, clothed and in his right mind, and descended the remaining stairs.

"That you, papa?" cried an eager childish voice.

"Yes, darling," was the no less eager reply.

The unseen hand which held the floodgate relaxed its grip. A door swung open and a troop of joyous children burst into the hall. Holderness seized the youngest and tossed her into the air, the baby soaring aloft with a tremulous crow, half delight, half fear. The others

clustered round him, and over their heads appeared the anxious face of their mother, a wavering smile on her lips.

"Dinner is ready, Ed," she said, and they all trooped into the dining-room.

"You have had no trouble with Mr. Cowan, I hope?" continued the lady of the house to the head of the table.

"Nothing to speak of. He was a trifle more tyrannical than usual."

"I hope you did not answer him back, Edward?"

"No; I discussed the matter with the crockery. the fact is, the brute thinks he has dismissed me."

"O Edward, he will not persist in that, surely. Won't he reconsider? He can never replace you."

"He will have no opportunity of reconsideration; I have resigned from his service. You remember that new place on Sixth Avenue where you bought some things the other week, and liked both material and the price? Well, by a curious coincidence, I fell in with the proprietor to-day, quite a young man, but with some wonderful ideas about business. He made me an offer and I accepted it. There is some scope for me at that place, while I've reached the limit at Cowan's. I'm to get five thousand dollars a year."

"Five—thousand—dollars!" murmured Mrs. Holderness, dwelling on each word. The possibilities of such a sum seemed illimitable.

CHAPTER X

"HER HAIR IS AUBURN"

THE fierce campaign in the wreckage room always set Edward Holderness right for twenty-four hours. It eliminated the fusil oil from his nature for the time being.

He was early at his new sphere of activity on Sixth Avenue next morning, and employed the first period of his day in rearranging the display of goods, adding artistic touches to the exhibits in the windows, and McAllister, watching the efforts of his latest employee, saw that here indeed was supplied the missing element in the store. The display began to take on an attractiveness that was irresistible. Ben re-entered the place after a parade along the pavement, during which he looked at the windows. He was aglow with enthusiasm, rubbing his hands one over the other in boyish glee.

"By smoke, Holderness, you're a genius. You make me want to come into my own store and buy my own goods."

"I trust the public will be affected in the same way, Mr. McAllister," said Holderness deferentially.

"That man's a jewel!" cried Ben to his partner in the inner office.

"Naturally," replied Monro, "seeing that he comes from the leading jewellery store of New York."

"Jim, that's unworthy of you. All the same I'm glad to hear you talk flippantly, for it shows you are in better spirits than you were yesterday."

"I couldn't well be in worse."

"That's all right. Jimmy, we've turned the corner now."

"We have turned the corner so often that it is some-

times a little discouraging. There always seems to be another corner just beyond."

"Don't you fret about that, my boy. Look at the crowds outside before those windows already. People will be trooping in here before long."

"I hope they'll hurry."

"They will, Jimmy, they will. 'Fear not, but trust in Providence, wherever thou mayst be,' as the poem says."

Monro was industriously absorbed in his accounts, bending over his desk. McAllister, never able to sit still for long at a time, had thrust his hands deep in his trousers pockets, and was standing looking through the glass partition at the buyers.

"By Jove, Jim, if you've any doubt about the value of Holderness, just see the way he is receiving this Fifth Avenue belle with the air of a court chamberlain!"

"I never had any doubt of the value of Holderness—if we can only pay him," replied Monro, without glancing up.

"Don't croak, Jimmy. I say, she is a superb girl. She deserves the treatment of a princess, and she's getting it, too. My stars, where have I seen that young woman before? Red hair—"

"Bronze," said Jim, automatically starting to his feet.

"Aha! I remember now. That's the maid of the Montreal mountain. Miss Van Ness is the name, isn't it? Jim, introduce me."

"I'll do nothing of the sort. I don't know her well enough to take such a liberty. Besides, my place is in the counting room at the present moment."

"Then why don't you get along with your work? What are you standing here for, staring at our lady customers? Jimmy, I'm amazed at you. However, I know her father. We've been in railway deals together. I'll go down and introduce myself."

"I wish you wouldn't," entreated his partner, earnestly. But the volatile McAllister was already threading his way along the lanes between the heaps of merchan-

dise. Holderness stepped respectfully aside as he saw his chief approach with a genial smile on his face.

"Miss Van Ness, I have some slight acquaintance with your father, so I take the liberty of paying my respects to you on the occasion of what I suppose to be your first visit to our establishment."

"Oh, you know my father? But how did you come to recognise me?"

"Well, to tell the truth, my partner has met you on one or two occasions. He is such a self-effacing fellow that he thought this did not entitle him to give me an introduction, so I've come to introduce myself."

"Your partner?"

"Yes, James Monro."

"Oh, is he your partner?" Miss Van Ness smiled and looked about her with visibly increased interest. "The last time I met him he was engaged with a friend in some engineering project down South."

"I was that friend. We were running a line of railway."

"Really? What a versatile pair you are! Then in the wilds of North Carolina, now in the centre of New York."

"Same business exactly, Miss Van Ness. Blazing our way to fortune through an unknown country in both instances."

The young woman laughed.

"Well, I hope you will succeed," she said.

"Bound to succeed," he replied jauntily, "when we have the goodwill of Miss Van Ness and the talented assistance of Mr. Holderness."

The girl responded in the same airy spirit.

"You must not forget the sterling qualities of your partner and your own very evident enterprise."

"That's so. Jimmy overlooks these things, but I never do. Won't you come in and see him? We keep Jimmy in that glass cage in the corner."

Again Miss Van Ness laughed with musical cadence, and whenever she did so Holderness smiled in defer-

ential sympathy. She had quite made up her mind not to go to the "cage," but she was ignorant of the magnetic influence which McAllister unconsciously exercised over every one who approached him. Against all inclination her purpose was swept aside by the resistless enthusiasm of a determined man.

"I think, Jimmy, as you call him, might more properly have come to see me if he knew I was here."

"Ah, Miss Van Ness, you are far from appreciating his retiring disposition. I am supposed to be the chief of the concern, so he sends me, on the principle that a princess must be received by the highest in office."

"Oh, if that is the case, and if his seeming neglect is merely a compliment in disguise, I shall be delighted to look through the bars of the cage at least."

"That's first-rate, Miss Van Ness. This way, please. Come right along. No charge for admission."

The girl followed him, an amused smile playing about the corners of her alluring lips. Monro was standing when they came in, awaiting them. She held out her hand.

"The mountain would not come to Mahomet," she said.

"The mountain had no idea it would be accorded the privilege of approach," replied Jim.

"Talking of Montreal, eh?" struck in McAllister, who had not caught the drift of the allusion. "Why, that's where I first had the pleasure of seeing you, on the mountain, as they call it. Won't you sit down, Miss Van Ness?"

"Thank you, no. Afternoon calls are brief, as you are aware, and I must not interrupt the blazing of the way to fortune." The girl spoke rapidly, as if to cover a trace of confusion shown by the pretty flush of the cheeks which greeted his mention of the northern city.

Jim cast a glance at his partner, who was all unconscious of saying anything disturbing.

"I hope Mr. McAllister has not been advertising his wares," said Monro, hurriedly. "Blazing the way to fortune sounds like one of his phrases."

"That's just what it is. Oh, yes, he has been advertising the business and boasting greatly about his partner. He said some very nice things of you, Mr. Monro. I hope you value properly so appreciative a colleague."

"Of course he doesn't, Miss Van Ness," broke in McAllister, before the person addressed could reply. "It is the prophet and his *house* over again. But I'm going to make the fortunes of Jimmy and every one else who is associated with me, see if I don't. Why, the possibilities in a business like this are something so enormous, on the lines we've laid down, that a mere—"

"Now, Ben; now, Ben. Stick to the ancient prophets and leave the financial profits alone."

"That's the way my enthusiasm is treated, Miss Van Ness," protested Ben. "You wouldn't suspect Jim of such a remark, but he's making them all the time. Talk about business worries—you have now some notion of what I am called on to put up with."

"Ben never knows when to stop when he begins on business," said Jim, "and it's getting to be the only subject on which he can converse."

"Indeed you seem to me like two boys having a lark. In spite of this large place, which might have sprung from Aladdin's lamp, and notwithstanding the dignified presence of your floorwalker, I find it impossible to take you seriously. I expect to come down Sixth Avenue some day and learn that the place has all disappeared in a night."

"Indeed, it is more than likely," admitted Jim grimly. "I can assure you, Miss Van Ness, I have no difficulty in taking the situation seriously enough at times."

The girl looked at him musingly.

"Yes, I can see that," she said with slow deliberation. "You are more worried than you were when I met you on horseback in North Carolina. But I will give you a good omen. Do you know the fate of the line you ran from the plains to the mountains?"

"Oh, that was a bogus line," said McAllister. "It was never intended to amount to anything, although we did not know the fact at the time."

"It is anything but a bogus line. The road is now nearly completed; right along your survey, too. My father hopes to be down at the opening shortly, before he goes to Europe. So you see your work was not wasted."

"I hope you are not going to Europe," said Ben in such earnest tones that Jim glanced at him with some disapproval, and the girl tinkled out a little laugh like a silver chime.

"No. This is to be a hurried trip; just over and back, as is the way with railway men. Why?"

"Well, you see I look on you as the good angel of the firm. You needn't frown, Jim; it's so. The first time I saw you we made a contract for that surveying, which was greatly to our advantage. The next time Jim saw you, and because he saw you we made a deal—"

"Excuse me, Ben, but all this cannot interest Miss Van Ness. Besides you know—"

"Oh, but it does," laughed the young woman. "It isn't every day that one is called a good angel. Men are too busy to say such things in New York. It is easy to see you are from the West, Mr. McAllister, and you understand women much better than does your partner. I think he underestimates their capacity for receiving flattery. Do go on with the pretty talk, as a story my father tells has it."

"I think, Jim, you had better leave the room or quit interrupting a man when he is eloquent. Nothing is more destructive to true oratory than untimely interpellation. Besides this, you know every word I said is true. Miss Van Ness has always appeared to us like the fairy with her magic wand, and immediately—"

"Really, after such a comparison as that I must go, Mr. McAllister. I cannot run the risk of having it impaired by the addition of another word. Most earnestly I wish you every success."

"Oh, we're bound to succeed—*now*," he cried confidently, with a gesture that would have pushed his hat further back if it had been on his head.

"Thank you, Mr. McAllister. Your accent on the

'now' is the very fragrance of adulation. No. Neither of you must come to the door with me. I insist. I have already greatly interrupted, which a presiding genius should never do. There should be but a wave of the wand, then away. Fairies always respect the motto, 'This is my busy day.' Besides, I want to have a quiet word with the polite floorwalker which must not be overheard by the proprietors."

"Oh, you mean Holderness; he is a proprietor, too, who came in with his cash just at the nick of—"

"Ben!" warned his partner.

"Why, what am I saying now?" asked the bewildered McAllister.

"Goodness only knows, and I'm sure you don't."

Miss Van Ness bestowed a mischievous glance upon the perturbed Monro, and laughed merrily.

"Poor Mr. Monro does not trust his mentor from the enchanted land. He fears the secrets of his house will get abroad on Fifth Avenue. I half think he is right, Mr. McAllister. Never tell too much. That's a motto in the railway business, which is applicable elsewhere. Fairies are fearful whisperers. And now finally good afternoon to both of you, and the best of luck."

Monro went back to his desk, but McAllister stood looking through the glass panes at the graceful figure making its way toward the hastening Holderness. Whatever suggestions she was pleased to impart were received by a very statue of respectful attention. Then the decorous Holderness saw her to the door with an attitude which said more plainly than words that he was the most highly honoured man in America.

"Say, Jim."

"Well?"

"Are you in love with that girl?"

"Really, McAllister, you sometimes say things that grate—"

"Are you, are you, are you?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you're a fool."

CHAPTER XI

"SWEET HUSBAND, BE NOT OF THAT MIND"

ON one of those occasions when the business outlook was particularly gloomy McAllister resolved to quit the expensive boarding-house on Madison Avenue and take rooms on a cross-town street further up the island, the name of which thoroughfare was designated by two large numerals. One peculiarity of his buoyant nature kept him ever from acknowledging defeat, even when he lay on his back, with the hard knee of fate pressing down on his breast. He was prone for the moment merely to take a rest; by-and-by fate would be overthrown, with firm hands clutching its throat.

So with the removal. In similar circumstances Monro would have said simply, "I am going up-town because it is cheaper to live there." McAllister gilded the event with the alchemy of his own transforming imagination, as the after-glow illumines the cold, forbidding Alp into a roseate paradise. Constance was looking pale and wan. The air of the upper island would be better for her than the denser atmosphere of the lower city. They would have more freedom in rooms of their own. They could eat what they liked and when they liked. There would be less restraint concerning dress. Connie could come down-town now and then and lunch with him. He ended by being convinced that, even were the cost ten times as great, the proposed shifting would be worth the extra price. He had some doubt regarding the view his wife might take of the change. The Madison Avenue private hotel was so obviously the most desirable kind of home for a woman heretofore unaccustomed to anything so grand. The stately promenade of Fifth Avenue was

next door, as one might say, and the glittering array of splendid shops on Broadway but a short two blocks distant. What more could a woman desire? Before broaching the subject he fortified himself with argument and determined to fall back on persuasion should argument fail.

He was therefore quite unprepared for the prompt acquiescence that met his expressed wish, somewhat tentatively put forth. She accepted with a shuddering glee that disconcerted her wondering husband.

"Why, Connie, I thought you liked this place. It is one of the most fashionable and expensive boarding-houses in New York."

"I loathe it," cried Constance with an emphasis that left no doubt of her sincerity.

"Then why didn't you say so long ago?"

"I did not want to interfere with your work. It was close to your place of business and I thought it convenient for you.

"Convenient? Well, it isn't so awful convenient. There's no cross-town street car within three blocks."

"You don't need a street car. The distance is only a few hundred yards."

"Oh, that's all very well, but walking is a waste of time. When a man is hanging on to a strap in a crowded street car he feels that he's with the procession. I'd sooner come down from Central Park in a car than walk four blocks."

"I have thought for a long time that we are simply throwing away money here. You are paying high for meals you never eat. We shall have the consolation of knowing that if you don't come home to lunch and dinner you are at least not paying double."

"Oh, I'm not moving up-town from notions of economy. I don't mind the price if you're satisfied. What a thing costs is a mere triviality. I believe in living to-day as if I were to be a millionaire to-morrow. Then when you become a millionaire there's the consolation of having lived well while you were reaching that point. I

have no sympathy with those fellows who get rich by saving. Think of the days they waste in poverty when they might have been feeding on the fat of the land. Spend lavishly and make more lavishly, is my motto."

" But what if you fail to become rich? "

" I sha'n't fail. I never think of that. Still, if I did, I should have the satisfaction of knowing I had lived like a millionaire, even if I never became one. Don't you believe in having a good time as we go along? "

" Yes, I do."

" So do I. We're true husband and wife, Connie. We think alike, and that's as it should be."

" I'm not sure that having a good time as we go along depends entirely on money."

" Of course not, but, then, money is the most important ingredient. I tell you what it is, my girl, lack of cash in New York is no joke. You'd soon realise that if supplies ran short."

" I suppose that is true anywhere."

" Certainly, but nowhere is it so true as in this little village; growing truer every day, too."

It must have been a great shock to the first man when the first woman for the first time contradicted him. It is probable that, for a moment, he lost faith in the correct balance of the universe, which hitherto he had regarded as perfect. Most likely he convinced the woman she was wrong (with a club). Perhaps the woman thus learned caution and dissimulation. The gift of reticence has, therefore, been handed on from woman to woman for her protection, and man, being an unobservant animal, has almost invariably credited her with the possession of volubility.

Marriage had been a deep disappointment to Constance McAllister. Instead of finding a husband, she had lost a lover. Whatever Ben's deficiencies might have been, there was little lack of assiduity with an object to be gained. As a suitor, no fault could have been found with him. He wanted Constance. and apparently wanted her more than anything else on earth. Whatever he did

he did with all his might, following the scriptural injunction he so often quoted. But the goal once attained, all interest seemed to vanish. He had caught his car.

"My time's worth a dollar a minute," was another favourite expression of his, "and before long I'll make it worth a dollar a second."

"Take care your time does not become so valuable that you'll find it too expensive to live," said Constance once, and Ben had laughed good-naturedly, considering the remark fair repartee, but it conveyed no warning to him.

Constance had pictured marriage as a union of thought, of interest, perhaps even of employment. She had fancied delightful lingering farewells each morning as he went to his work, or it might be a stroll with him down-town on his way to business; but you cannot linger with a man who is breathless to be off, or stroll with one who is racing for a car, whose pulses are beating "a dollar a minute, a dollar a minute."

In the morning his attention seemed strained to catch the sound of the street-car bell. The jingle of a spoon in a saucer made him start. It was late at night when he came home, silent and dog-tired, an exhausted storage battery, with scant time between that hour and daylight for the refilling of the cells with electricity.

He became more and more unable to converse on any subject but one. Nothing else interested him. Let the talk drift outside the immediate radius of business, and his engrossed eyes showed that they saw only the absent activities of the store.

More and more Constance came to wonder why he had married her. She filled no long-felt want in his nature, so far as she was able to discern. The word "home" had no tangible meaning for him. She became convinced that if he had known what was before him he would never have married, could he have spared time from his really important affairs to give the problem any consideration. What he needed was an open-all-night hotel, close to his business, with a swift unceasing elevator to take *him speedily to* and from his room; a meal-at-all-hours'

house, with a stand-up, quick-lunch counter attached. A home in the northern portion of the city was merely an incumbrance to such a man, a time-waster, and she wondered he remembered even its existence.

In distant Illinois she had had many friends; in this hurrying city not even an acquaintance, with less and less desire as time went on to form any social relations. The infrequent letters from former compeers were a solace, not unmixed with sadness, but when they ceased she scarcely regretted their stoppage. She remembered that once—it seemed as long ago as the West was remote—she had feared to brave the opinion of these people by a runaway marriage. Now she realised of what small importance would have been anything they might have said. Sometimes she felt an impulse to cry out against this uncompanionable existence, but a moment's reflection showed the hopelessness of protest. The inherited gift of reticence also kept her silent. Companionship is a boon which to be of value must come unsought. She could not beg for what should have been her own by right. Then she knew intuitively that anything she might say would make no impression on the mind of a man who had caught his car and need not worry any more about that particular achievement. The slight tentative advances she put forth had not been successful.

Once, in summer, when the days were long, but still too short for him, she said:

"Ben, the night boat for Albany leaves at six o'clock. Couldn't you quit business one day before that hour and take the steamer with me, say as far as Cornwall, or wherever it stops? We could dine leisurely on board, and either stay at Cornwall all night or come back that evening by late train or boat?"

Ben's eyes opened wide at such an unbusinesslike proposal, and a spark of anger glinted in them for a moment; women are so exacting and unthinking; but his expression softened almost instantly and beamed sympathy upon her.

"*Why, Connie*, that's not a bad idea when the weather

is so hot. I wish you'd do that. I want you to have a good time, and I'm bound you shall have it. You go. Any evening you want to. Only let me know and I won't bother coming home that night. I tell you, girl, I'd like to go with you, but can't just now. We're in a sort of a crisis down-town, and I'm the man at the wheel."

His phrase about not "bothering" to come home stuck like a burr in her mind. She made no more suggestions of this kind, nor did she take the night boat.

It may be supposed that a man so thoroughly religious as McAllister would have been a constant church-goer, but such was not the case. He never went to church, nor did he feel the need of it. He no more thought of attending service than of connecting himself with a night school and redemonstrating the problems of Euclid. He knew that every proposition in Euclid could be proven, so where was the practical advantage of going over the ground again? Nothing any preacher in New York might say could add to his already overwhelming faith. Besides, his relations with his Maker were too intimate and direct for him to accept any mere human intervention. It was one of his principles in business never to deal with a subordinate when he might hold communication with the head of the firm; then, when a matter was settled, no readjustment was necessary. In religion likewise. McAllister always went to headquarters, and the church he looked upon as a mere sub-agency. Sunday was to him literally a day of rest; a day to arise late; a day when it was not necessary to put on a stiff collar; a day when it was better, perhaps, not to think of business, yet, as the Lord was a partner, these thoughts need not be excluded.

Constance yearned for the church; at first went alone, but was even more solitary there than elsewhere, and so ceased her visits. Then Sunday was a day when there was an opportunity of talking unhurriedly with her husband—if he chanced to be awake.

Every night she waited up for him, often so late that the roar of New York ceased for the time, followed by *an uneasy silence,* ripped apart now and then by the

wheels of a belated cab; a silence that seemed to come grudgingly upon the great city, as of time lost by compulsion. Attired for the night, with a shawl about her shoulders, there she sat thinking, thinking by the open window until her pathetic reverie was broken by the quick, nervous step she listened for; whereupon she slipped into bed and was seemingly fast asleep when Ben came in, stealing softly that he might not disturb her. He slept quickly, she tardily, often the grey daylight finding her eyes unclosed. Usually he lay like one dead, thoroughly exhausted, but sometimes the problems of the day importuned the slumbering brain, tormenting for solution, and he muttered with inquietude.

It would have been some consolation if during unconsciousness her name had ever been murmured, but even this slight comfort was denied her. In the stillness of the night she might hear, and sink back with a sigh:

"It's all right, Jimmy. Don't you worry. I'll—I'll get the money. It'll be here—before we need it."

CHAPTER XII

"THERE IS MONEY; SPEND IT."

IF any one of the throng passing along the pavement that bordered Sixth Avenue had cast a glance at Grace Van Ness daintily stepping into her well-appointed carriage, the door held open by a footman with finger at the brim of his hat, the pedestrian might have said that here at least was one who had no quarrel with fortune. Nevertheless it was a young woman bitterly dissatisfied with herself who drove across to Fifth Avenue and up that princely thoroughfare. Why had she gone so tamely into the glass-lined office? The pronounced embarrassment of Monro had given point to the knowing glances of his partner, which the latter had not the delicacy to conceal. The two, each in his own way, had placed her in the position of the pursuer, an attitude not only entirely foreign to her, of all people, but extremely distasteful. She had thoughtlessly allowed herself to be swept into the office by McAllister's exuberant insistence, when she should have declined the invitation and left Monro to make the advance if he cared to do so. She had been over-friendly, and now that it was too late reproached herself for her impulsive action. The two were probably discussing her at that moment, looking upon her as a good and influential customer gained. Chance had thrown Monro and herself together twice; chance aided by her own impetuosity had brought about a third meeting, and McAllister had, in her very presence, balanced the profit and loss of the encounters. The situation was revolting, and she came to a determination that should she ever converse with Monro again, her own coldness would disillusionise the young man, if he presumed upon her supposed preference. Still he was

unlikely to do that, and she shuddered as she thought he might imagine she was actually encouraging him. She laughed scornfully to herself at this reflection; it seemed absurd, yet could she be but sure that he entertained such an idea, her contempt should cut him like a whip, when next they met, if indeed they ever did meet, an occurrence she would take good care to avoid. The new store should never see her again; she would send a cheque for the purchases made, and there an end.

And now, illumined by this latest episode, her former complaisance toward him assumed a new significance, and she passed through a humiliation of memory, condemning herself for an unwonted interest in a stranger not even properly introduced. She blamed the magic of the clear lake during that unconventional morning walk along its silver shores, and then, with a spasm of honesty, transferred the censure to her own heedless shoulders. Well, it should be a lesson to her, and a beacon of warning for the future. She would forget his existence, and if he remembered her what did it matter?

The cheque was promptly sent, and had she known its fate her distress might perhaps have been mitigated. As a matter of course, the slip of paper passed through the hands of James Monro, and he gazed long at its signature, as if questioning its worth. This, however, could not have been the case, for, looking about him and satisfying himself that he was alone, he took furtively from his purse the amount nominated in the bond, placed that sum into the bait the bank was to swallow, then folded the cheque and put it into his pocket-book—a most unbusiness-like transaction, nowhere to be duplicated in New York that day, for surely a draft is valueless unless it is to be cashed.

The activity of New York lends itself to the art of forgetting. There is much going forward there, and even a retentive memory has some ado to hold its own. Grace Van Ness went West with her father in his private car, and then South to the opening of the new railway. She saw him off for Europe and had half a wish to accompany him, but the journey was to be a hurried one,

so her voyage was postponed until a more convenient season. These events aided Miss Van Ness in driving from her mind the disturbing remembrance of her visit to the glass room on Sixth Avenue. If a stray thought of Monro intruded itself, she sent it forth as an uninvited guest, and at last came to the conclusion that she was finally rid of all such.

One morning the unsought remembrance was brought sharply to her consciousness. It was not a time when visitors were to be expected, and the girl sat in her own morning room at the rear of the house, overlooking the quiet, green lawn, with a fountain sending up a thin jet into the air. The room was partly boudoir, partly library, partly study and partly parlour: an interesting chamber, not too large to lose an air of cosiness; not too small to be overcrowded by its furnishing. Three bookcases held favourite volumes, while tempting easy chairs and rockers invited their perusal. An open rolltop desk in a corner bestowed an office air to the apartment, while a daintier davenport, richly inlaid, prettier, less convenient and less solid, suggested the writing of social invitations in contrast to the other's hint of business documents. An open window gave access to a balcony, and from this a flight of steps led down to the lawn and the fountain.

Grace heard the bell ring, but paid no heed to it. She was aware of a conference at the door, then a raised voice cried:

"Gone to Europe! When will he return?"

The reply of the servant was inaudible.

"Is Miss Van Ness in?"

Again the murmur of the menial, indistinguishable.

"Well, just find out, will you? No; I haven't a card with me. Say it's Mr. McAllister, and tell her it's most important I should see her."

It needed no announcement of the name to acquaint Grace Van Ness with the identity of the caller. The voice did that the moment she heard it. She was standing by her desk when the servant gave his message.

"I am not at home," she said. The servant turned. "Wait a moment." A shade of perplexity clouded her

smooth brow. "Oh, very well," she added at last, "show him in here."

The voice which rang so stridently through the hall, accustomed to softly spoken cadences, had in it an undertone of despair which had appealed, in spite of herself, to the girl's sympathy. It was a cry of distress, commonplace as were the uttered words.

When McAllister came in she was startled to see the change that had taken place in his appearance since last she met him. He was thin, pale and haggard, with a fierce light in his eye that savoured of insanity. As he came impulsively forward, she drew back instinctively toward the wall, but McAllister did not notice the shrinking; he shook her reluctant hand with excessive cordiality. There was a tremor almost of tears in his voice when he spoke.

"Miss Van Ness, it is more than good of you to see me when I am practically a stranger to you. I will come directly to the point, for I am sure you are wondering why I called at such an hour. Miss Van Ness, you are the one person in the world to whom I can turn in my time of need, in my hour of trouble. I am on the very verge of bankruptcy. If I cannot raise ten thousand dollars I must see everything I possess swept away, all my plans brought to nothing. I have tried to get the money everywhere I thought there was a chance of obtaining it, and now you are my last hope."

McAllister paused, breathing hard, like a man who is running a race, and drew his handkerchief across his brow. The girl looked at him, almost in fear.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked quietly. She had been standing and had swiftly resolved before he came in not to ask him to be seated. McAllister sank into an easy chair with a sigh, while she took a chair beside the desk.

"You asked for my father, did you not? He is in Europe."

"Yes, so they told me. I remembered you said at the store you were not going to Europe with him, and I told you I was glad of it. Now I know why I said that."

"Do you expect me to find such a sum of money as you mentioned?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well, you are a rich woman, are you not, Miss Van Ness?"

The girl laughed nervously, looking down at her desk.

"I don't know that I am," she replied at last, "and even if I were, I do not see how you can expect me to put money into a business which you say is on the verge of bankruptcy. That is surely a strange inducement to offer an investor."

"I speak the exact truth to you, Miss Van Ness. Yes, it would be a strange reason to give an investor. It would not be business, but this is not a matter of business."

Grace looked up quickly, some trace of a frown on her brow.

"What is it then?" she asked shortly.

"It *is* business, of course, in a way, but I thought you would let me have the money without requiring strict commercial reasons for doing so."

"I cannot imagine why you should think that."

"Well, Miss Van Ness, I would rather not explain. All I can say is, I felt certain you would favour me with the money if you had it. The only question in my mind was whether you could place your hands on such a sum during your father's absence."

"That was the only question, was it? Not very flattering to me or to my business capabilities, I must say. Perhaps I can help you to explain, Mr. McAllister. As a first guess, it did not occur to you in the beginning to come to me."

"You are quite right; it did not."

"As a second guess, the suggestion was made to you?"

"Yes, it was."

"And you eagerly accepted it?"

"No, Miss Van Ness, on the contrary, I resisted it.

I flatly refused to come here. I tried everywhere else. I went to my old employers—the men for whom we did the surveying down in North Carolina—they laughed me out of their office. They could well have put up the money and never have missed it, even if it were lost, which it won't be. Everywhere I was refused."

"What extraordinary inducements you offer me for making you a loan! You expect me to accept a security that no one else in New York will look at."

"I don't ask a loan. I will give you ten thousand dollars' worth of stock in our business for the money."

"Stock in a bankrupt enterprise! I am confident you were to conceal that fact from me."

"Certainly not. He told me I could not fail to get the money. 'Go to Miss Van Ness,' he said, 'and you're sure of the ten thousand.' I didn't want to come, as I told you, but you see I had to, at last, and even now I asked for your father, and would have gone to him if he had been here, in spite of the fact that there is One who knows what you will do—"

"Oh, this is intolerable!" cried Grace Van Ness, rising. Her agitated fingers had been tapping the desk impatiently as he went fatuously on, entirely oblivious to the effect his words were producing. The rich colour stained the former pallor of her face.

"This is intolerable!" she repeated. "Tell your confident friend that he is mistaken, that—"

"He cannot be, Miss Van Ness."

"But I say he is, and I assure you my word is final. How dare you come to me with such a recital! I don't wonder you hesitate to confess it. I suppose Mr. Monro, shrewder than you, cautioned you not to mention it."

"Monro? Why, Jim knows nothing about it."

"You have just admitted that he ordered you to come to me."

"Who? Jim! He's the last man in the world to think of such a thing."

"Then of whom were you speaking? Who suggested that you should ask me for the money?"

"The Lord. I was afraid you would not understand, but there it is. Jim begs me not to thrust my religious faith into people's faces, especially in matters of business. But the Lord has stood my friend too often for me to doubt His power. I would proclaim Him from the housetops, but I recognise that Jim has a right to make his views felt in our partnership, so, usually, I keep silence, except with him."

Grace gazed at the perfervid speaker with wide-open eyes. She saw that he had not noticed, in his rapt preoccupation, the error of identity into which she had fallen. Gently she sank down into her chair again, rested her elbow on the desk and shaded her flushed face with her hand. When the rhapsody ceased she said quietly:

"Is your faith in the success of your business as firm as your faith in Providence?"

"Of course. They're one and the same thing. That's where people make their great mistake. They believed in the power of the Lord in Bible times, but they don't realise that Jehovah is unchanging. I tell you, Miss Van Ness, the Almighty is the most potent business force in the United States to-day, if we would but acknowledge the fact."

"You think then that I shall not lose the money if I entrust it to you?"

"Lose it? Why, it will make you one of the richest women in New York. Lose it? You *can't* lose it."

The girl took her hand from her face, having recovered her composure. She drew forth a book from a pigeonhole in the desk, consulted it for a few moments and made some figures on a pad with a pencil.

"If I give you a cheque for five thousand dollars now, and another for the same amount this day week, will that do?"

"Perfectly. As long as I can promise people a definite date for payment that will be sufficient."

"Very well."

She wrote out a cheque and handed it to him with a smile.

"I am trusting in you rather than in the Lord, Mr. McAllister."

"Don't say that, Miss Van Ness."

"Well, in both, then. Mr. McAllister, you are the most remarkable man I have ever met. I will post the other cheque to you next week."

CHAPTER XIII

"WHAT, WILT THOU FLOUT ME THUS?"

McALLISTER seemed to be walking down Fifth Avenue; in reality he was treading on air. His head was in the clouds, and his thoughts soared into regions still more lofty. His elastic temperament had hoisted him at a bound from a state of the deepest depression into realms of bliss undreamed of by the most visionary opium eater. The path to success was cleared with a sweep of the hand, and the obstacles which lay upon it so heavily an hour ago had vanished into space. He thought that nothing now could daunt him. Automatically he crossed Broadway and so into Sixth Avenue. His feet took him to his place of business without direction from his head. The sight of his own store brought him down to the realities of life without detracting from his jubilant exultation. Never had the pavement before it seemed so thronged; never had the great plate-glass windows looked so attractive. Never were there so many buyers inside, and he walked through among them, repressing an inclination to shout and to slap the dignified Holderness on the back. But he succeeded in reaching the glass office without undue demonstration, and there, with shoulders bent over his desk, was a man who would make heavy draft on his fund of self-congratulation. Ben's hat, ready to drop down his back, was tossed jauntily into a corner, and, rapping his knuckles on Monro's desk, he laughed out:

"Jimmy, my boy, I've got the money."

"Thank God for that," said Monro, looking up with a sigh of relief, and smiling in sympathy with the other's boyish antics.

"Exactly. You're putting the thanks where they be-

long, and don't you forget it. Now, James, my son, just soak that cheque into the bank, where it will do the most good, and don't get discouraged the next time your uncle goes a-foraging."

Monro took up the cheque so joyously thrown down before him, glanced at it, then fixed his gaze upon it. The writing might have been couched in some language he could not understand, so intently did he scrutinise it. Suddenly the paper dropped from his hands as if it had scorched his fingers. He wheeled round in his swivel chair, white about the lips.

"Where did you get this cheque?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Where? Didn't you read the name?"

"Do you mean to say you asked Miss Van Ness for the money?"

"Yes, and I got it, too."

Jim rose to his feet.

"Ben, that cheque must go back. It is not to be cashed."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"My meaning is plain enough. I cannot have Miss Van Ness put her money into a sinking concern. You know that this business is practically insolvent. You had no right to go to her and delude her into thinking she is making a profitable investment."

"Delude? I didn't delude any one. I told her exactly how we were situated."

"Oh, I know the way you talk. You had no right to go there."

"Why hadn't I?"

"Well, if you don't understand why you hadn't, I'll never be able to explain. You seem to lack a certain feeling of delicacy—"

"Thunder, Jim! You told me yourself you didn't care anything about her."

Monro made a gesture of impatience.

"That has nothing to do with it. I tell you the most hardened gambler in Wall Street would have some hesitation about approaching a lady for money. This cheque must go back."

McAllister picked up the paper, folded it again and put it into his pocket-book.

"Will you send it back?" persisted Monro, still speaking with enforced calmness.

"Of course, if you say so, but you must remember there are other interests at stake besides yours or your delicate feelings. There's Holderness' money, for instance. Will you refund it if our business goes down? Now, Jim, be reasonable. You know we simply must have this money. I'll tell you what I'll do. There's all New York outside. Put on your hat, go out and bring in ten thousand dollars, then I'll send this cheque back with thanks. You can't do it, eh? I know you can't. Such a sum isn't to be picked up on every street corner. Very well, then; don't object when I've found the cash."

"Why, curse it all, you never would have known her if it hadn't been for me. *You've* found the cash! I say, by God, that cheque goes back."

"Look here, Jim, I won't have any swearing in this office."

"You'll have worse than swearing in a minute—"

"You're getting excited all for nothing. You think she gave me the cheque because she knows *you*. Nothing of the sort. She believes as I do that this investment will make her a rich woman."

Monro took a few quick turns in the room until he had gained control over himself once more. Then he spoke with some of his usual calmness.

"Are you going to cash that cheque?"

"Certainly. Within half an hour from now it will be in the bank. I'll put it there myself to make sure."

"Very well then, I leave this business."

"I'm sorry. I'll do the best I can without you, and you may be sure that you will get every penny of your share by-and-by, multiplied a thousand-fold."

"Damn the shares!"

Monro put on his hat and walked out of the establishment, looking neither to the right nor left. He took exactly the same route by which his partner had so shortly before returned, in a very different state of mind.

He was hardly in the proper mood for making his first call upon an estimable young lady, but he gave no thought to that, striding on with a vehemence that scattered unwary pedestrians this way and that, leaving unheeded in his trail curses as deep as his own. This, however, is a world of compensations. Metaphorically he had thrown a pail of cold water over his enthusiastic partner, who had done his best, and who at that moment was sitting disconsolately at his desk with his head in his hands; now Monro was on his way to receive his own douche.

Grace Van Ness reclined in a low easy chair by the open window, gazing abstractedly at the thin uprising jet of the tinkling fountain outside. She was reviewing the various phases of the extraordinary conversation so shortly before concluded with McAllister, and trying to discover why she had made such an unconsidered investment of more money than she could conveniently part with until her father returned. That he would censure her imprudence she had not the slightest fear. He would laugh at her, and she herself laughed at the mental picture she drew of her father's bantering hilarity over her financial foresight She endeavored to find some reasonable excuse for her entirely unpremeditated action. First there was her womanly sympathy for one so manifestly stricken as McAllister, a man fighting with his back to the wall in that terrible commercial arena where no quarter is given. Yet prudence whispered that she could not save all such; victims were going down around her every day. It was doubtful if she had rescued even this man. She had prolonged the struggle, but could be sure of no further outcome. Then, there was her error in regarding Monro as the instigator of the visit. That was the critical point of the encounter; the sudden discovery that she was mistaken, the sudden upleap of joy in her own heart that she was mistaken, the sudden fear that McAllister would penetrate the mystery of her misapprehension, the sudden relief at seeing the single-minded man had no more suspicion of it than knowledge of the fact that he was conversing with the most charm-

ingly dressed woman in New York. (Her morning gown was a ravishing dream from Paris.) All these things had formed a series of such rapidly conflicting emotions that the reaction left her completely at McAllister's mercy. She laughed again softly at the picture she conjured of her own helplessness and was thankful that, all in all, his demands had been so moderate.

But what would James Monro think when her cheque passed through his hands for an amount so considerable? What version would McAllister give his partner of the negotiations which had resulted in the transfer of that bit of paper? If the account were accurately rendered would Monro read between the lines the secret that had been overlooked by McAllister? The smooth brow became troubled, the sweet lips more firmly closed. The disconcerting reverie was interrupted by a slight tap at the door.

"Mr. James Monro would like to see you for a moment, miss."

The girl sat up very straight in her easy chair, an expression of alarm coming swiftly to her eyes, the name uttered chiming so intimately with the theme of her thoughts.

"What—what did you say?"

"Mr. Monro, miss, wants to see you for a moment, miss."

"Very well." She leaned back again, breathing quickly. "Show him into the—no, bring him here."

James Monro had come on no money-hunting expedition, and his vision was not obscured by the jaundice of gold. The supreme lotus flower half reclining before him, with slender fingers interlaced, and mocking hazel eyes uplifted toward him, formed an entrancing picture of luxurious indolence. He knew nothing of Paris gowns, but he saw instinctively that anything added to or detracted from this vision would be an interference with perfection. The seemingly negligent massing of her auburn hair was in itself a bewilderment; it was almost the first time he had seen her without a hat, and as his dazzled eyes sank from this sunset effect they encoun-

tered the vanishing and reappearing tip of a dainty slipper swaying lazily in a wave-crest of foamy lace.

"Good morning, Mr. Monro. Will you forgive inertia and excuse my inaction? I am so deliciously comfortable here that I hate to move and as the hour is early I was not expecting visitors. Please sit down in the most lethargic chair you can find, that you may not be a standing reproach to a dawdling woman."

Monro seated himself rather blindly on the first chair that came to hand. His hat fell to the floor; he made an ineffectual effort at rescue, then abandoned the attempt when it rolled out of reach in a corner. The traces of storm had not yet cleared from his countenance, which was now overspread with a flush of vexation at his own awkwardness. She watched him through half-closed lids, a faint smile on her lips, but showed no inclination to put him further at his ease by either word or action.

"Yes, it is early," he said at last, "but I suspect you have had a visitor before me."

"There is certainly a precedent for your call. How far down the list of members of your firm do you think it will extend? Am I to look for Mr. Holderness next? Why not come in a body; make it a sort of annual outing? But I think you should give me notice, that I might provide refreshment."

"Miss Van Ness, you are laughing at me, but I assure you I am very serious."

"I see you are, and I don't object to that, unless you insist on my being serious, too."

"You must stop the payment on that cheque you gave to McAllister this morning, and there is no time to be lost."

"*Must?* Really that is a most unusual request; or should I rather say command? One does not sign cheques in order to countermand them. This is not the first of April, Mr. Monro."

"You do not understand the situation, Miss Van Ness. We are on the verge of bankruptcy and—"

"Almost the very words your partner used," drawled the young woman.

"What? Did he tell you there was every chance of the money being totally lost?"

"He intimated as much. Of course, I know that great gains are usually preceded by great risks. I am taking the present risk for the chance of the future gain. My father has told me that much money is made by buying when concerns are on the verge of bankruptcy."

"Yes, but you are not buying at bankrupt prices; you are taking stock at its face value—at par, in fact, when it is not worth one per cent. on the market. If a forced sale came on us—if we went into the hands of a receiver who insisted on immediate realisation, the whole business would not bring in cash what you are paying for a minute fraction of it."

"I understand that perfectly."

"Then why did you let him have the money?"

"Because I have a great belief in Mr. McAllister."

"For no other reason?"

"What other reason do you suggest?"

"I make no suggestion."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, but you do. What other reason is in your mind?"

(Now, James Monro, why scrutinise that Persian rug at your feet? Its design and workmanship are incomparable, no doubt, but they have nothing to do with the point at issue. Answer her question like an honest man. Say that you care so much for her that you cannot bear to have her suffer the smallest loss if you can prevent it. Do not confuse your mind with non-essentials. All these evidences of wealth around you should have no influence upon your thoughts. A man is a man, and, be he straightforward, there is nothing better in this world, save a woman who is also straightforward, and there she sits before you. The main thing is that you are alone with her, not to be interrupted, and such a situation, whether in barn or boudoir, is priceless. Raise your head quickly and intercept that look now bent upon you, before she has time to veil it with seeming indifference.)

"You will not answer my question?" Her voice was

suave and the lids half-closed again. "Has Mr. McAllister obtained money from others beside myself?"

"Yes. From every person who would let him have it."

(Now you look up eagerly enough, but you have missed something. She is talking to you about money, but not thinking of it. A moment since her heart was beating faster than her nonchalant attitude would have led you to suppose, had you but glanced at her, undoubtedly more beautiful than any weft of a Persian loom.)

"And do you think these people will also lose their investments?"

"If one loses, all will lose."

"What did they say when you warned them?"

"Warned them? I didn't warn them."

"Then why do you warn me?"

"I—I—you see it's different—I—"

"Come, Mr. Monro, do not hesitate. Surely you realise the humiliating position in which you place me. You are actually assuming that I gave this cheque because I had— Oh, I cannot bring myself to state it, yet it must be stated. You dare to hint that I was influenced by some partiality for Mr. James Monro—a man whom I have met two or three times in the most casual way. Because he has extended to me a few courtesies, and because I have been so foolish as to accept them, he thinks—"

"I—I assure you, Miss Van Ness, you are mistaken," cried Monro, rising, or rather staggering to his feet.

"I am *not* mistaken. Your whole attitude bears out my suspicion. Why have you the presumption to come here and offer me unasked advice? You took no such trouble with the others, it seems. You must have imagined that I would receive your advice—yes—your commands, even, for it was in that form your will was first presented—with all the docile humility of an infatuated woman. Well, if this visit has disabused your mind of all such preposterous ideas I shall not be sorry you made it, even if you have compelled me to speak very plainly to you."

In some way James Monro had secured his hat, and he held it now with both hands, as if he would like to be sure of something. He stood his ground, too, with quiet stubbornness when he had better have followed his departed opportunity and taken his leave. But he felt he was being treated unjustly and with unnecessary harshness.

"You take no account of my sense of responsibility. If it had not been for me you never would have met Benjamin McAllister. If you lose your money I hold myself to blame."

"Your sense of responsibility would appear to better advantage in assisting the efforts of your partner than in attempting to undermine them."

"Undermine them?"

"Certainly. What else are you doing here? Does he know of your errand?"

"No."

"I was sure of it."

"I will withdraw from the company."

"You will apologise to Mr. McAllister and remain with him."

"I will apologise to him; I see I have wronged him; he is so optimistic that I feared he had—still that does not matter—I was mistaken."

"You will say nothing to him of your visit here."

"Then how can I apologise to him for what you regard as my treachery toward him?"

"By the only kind of apology that is of any value. By working with him and thus helping to make sure that the money is not lost."

"Very well, I'll do it. Good-bye and forgive me, if you can, for coming."

"Good-bye."

(Yes, James, they can be hard when they like, and it is no consolation, is it, that they may suffer when they inflict. It might have been different had you intercepted that glance unaware. But very likely you would not have known what it meant.)

BOOK V

SPOILS TO THE VICTORS

CHAPTER I

"THEY ARE SO LINKED IN FRIENDSHIP"

PATRICK MAGUIRE took up his residence in the ward that once upon a time elected him alderman; for although he had resigned the honour upon being appointed Fire Escape Inspector, there were many people in the district who were friends of his, and he liked to be near them. And, by the same token, Patrick himself spared no trouble to oblige a friend; he was never so busy but he would drop his own concerns at the word and tramp the town to confer a favour upon one who needed it. No matter how poor the applicant might be, no matter how slight his political influence, Maguire spared no pains in accomplishing the service sought, doing it cheerfully, making nothing of it, and leaving no weight of obligation on the shoulders he had lightened of some burden. Frequently he was offered money by people who could ill afford it, who wanted this or that axe ground; but Pat, to their amazement, would never touch a penny; yet his refusal gave no hint of any high moral standpoint that reduced the would-be briber to a lower plane than himself. He never left behind him a rankling sense of his own superiority.

"Look here," he would say, patting the other on the back or throwing an arm about his shoulder, "the little trifle I've done for you to-day, you'll do for me in some

other way, to-morrow or next day or never, as it happens. If you never do me a good turn it'll be for want of the chance and not for want of the will. It's well I know that. I'll have a drink wid ye, if you'll have one with me next time we meet, but there's no money goin' to pass between you and *me*."

There was always an intimate inflection on the last word, which included the hearer in the circle of Pat's particular friends. No doubt was left in the listener's mind but that Pat would take money on occasion, although not on *this* occasion—not from a cherished comrade. There was nothing of the holier-than-thou in Patrick's walk or conversation.

The hundredth ward could scarcely be termed a residential district. It was noisy with factories of all kinds, and inhabited largely by working people. One or two of its streets were frankly slums of the lowest order; others were closely packed with evil-smelling tenements. But on the outskirts of the district there had been erected recently several somewhat pretentious apartment houses, and in the upper part of "The Kalamazoo" Patrick Maguire and his young wife resided. To the poorer inhabitants of the district "The Kalamazoo" seemed a palace; even Lottie herself was impressed with its magnificence, and wrote long letters to her mother describing its many conveniences. But Maguire at home or abroad was equally accessible to all comers, and his flat became a sort of unofficial Mecca for numerous pilgrims in trouble. The cynical would say that this was merely the sowing of a crop to be garnered on election day, but the chances are that Lottie's own estimate was nearer the truth. She had not the slightest doubt that it was all owing to Patrick's sympathetic heart. He hated to see any one in difficulties, and goodness knows the poor of that great city had difficulties enough. Patrick was just as ready to aid some afflicted old woman with no vote, whose scapegrace son had been deservedly nabbed by the police, as he was to obey the behest of the Mayor of New York.

"That's all right, mother. Don't you fret. The boy

won't be sent to the island this trip. Judge Grady is a friend of mine, and a decenter man than John Grady is not to be found in all this country. I'll drop in a word for the boy. An' what's his name, by-the-bye?"

He would make it a point to be at the police court, hold a little whispered conference with the judge, and when, to the scorn and scandal of the law, the frightened lad was left off with a caution, Maguire would say a few words in season to him as they walked up the street together.

"See here, ye young spalpeen, it's in gaol you'd be this day if your poor old mother hadn't come up to my flat, weepin' for ye. An' it's for her I do it, not for you, till ye show yourself worth that much trouble. I can take a drink with the best of them, either because I'm dry or because I'm in good company, but I don't make a beer vat of meself and go howlin' down the street breakin' innocent people's heads an' other folk's windows. Leave the stuff alone, if ye can't carry it decently an' as a man should. Be kind to your old mother. Ye can pick up plenty o' those dirty thieves ye were with Saturday night, that ran away an' left ye when ye got pinched, but ye'll never have but one mother ; see that ye mind that, now, or I'll tell the cops to club the stupid head off ye next time they run ye in, and they'll do it, too, begobs."

Maguire, however, did not have everything his own way in political circles. It was one peculiarity of the man that people either hated him or loved him. There seemed to be no middle ground on which an acquaintance of Maguire's could stand. Rafferty and his gang cordially detested him, and the chiefs at headquarters seemed to have a distrust of him. He had been taken into the association largely on Judge Grady's representations that here was a man to be accounted with, but Grady himself stood by no means high in the councils of Tammany. Boss Bradley favoured him, so the rest tolerated him, but he was not of their kidney. John Grady was a university graduate, actually in possession of a degree, and he was a stock illustration of the frequently stated fact that an educated man might succeed in New

York politics. Grady was supposed to be incorruptible, so far as money went, but it was asserted that he always obeyed the commands of the Boss, which was doubtless true enough. Grady had his living to make as well as the rest of us, and a police court judge, impervious to all influence, would have been of little use to Tammany.

More than once Maguire saw that Grady was uneasy about him. The judge had a strong personal liking for this energetic young man from the West, and aside from that he felt the responsibility of having practically forced him upon the party. During the first few years of Maguire's occupancy of the fire escape inspectorship he was not interfered with to any great extent. The salary attached to the office was too small to afford any temptation to those with "pull" enough to have ousted him, replacing him with one of themselves, but as time went on it became whispered that there was more in this berth than appeared to the eye. Although many new buildings were being erected, few of them were decorated with fire escapes, while older edifices which should long ago have complied with the law had not done so.

Curiously enough those good citizens who endeavoured to meet the requirements of the statutes made and provided found great difficulty and incurred much expense in striving to please the inspector, who seemed extremely anxious to protect life and limb and was resolved to have appliances that were practically perfect; an object not easy to attain in this defective world. The obstacles, however, dissolved after a personal interview with Maguire, and it is to be supposed that the arguments of owners and contractors convinced him that their precautions were ample.

"I wish," said Judge Grady to him one day, "that you would pay more attention to the chiefs, and less to those no-account people in the slums."

"Now, Grady, that's just where you're away off, but I suppose it's that unfortunate college education leads you astray. Thank God, I never saw the outside of a college, let alone the inside ovvut. What puts the chiefs, as ye call them, where they are, but the people of the

slums, as ye call them. Seems to me, judge, that you've got the names of things mixed; it's the real chiefs I'm attendin' to, and not their no-account servants at the City Hall. I'm a great believer in the people, John, an' I'm one of them myself."

"Oh, that's all right enough. We all believe in the people," replied the judge, "but you can't get at the people except through Tammany."

"I did it before," said the inspector, drily.

"Yes, but you did it through fr— You did it through a fluke; you can't do that a second time."

"Ye were goin' to say through fraud, John. It's all right; don't apologize. I see ye do know the right names of some things in spite of the college. Well, to tell the truth, John, the boys at headquarters don't think much o' me, an' I think just as little o' them. You told me once that Tammany requires the obedience of a soldier and the work of a dock-wholloper. She does. Very well, I obey, and I work. Now what more can they ask?"

"They can ask your office, for instance, and get it, too, Patrick, my boy. I'm warning you for your own good. They're muttering a bit about you. You see you hold an office by appointment, and are playing the game of a man looking to be elected, and that strikes me as not being so clear-headed as I expected of you. A man holding an appointment tries to please the people who can dismiss him. You ignore them."

They were conversing in Maguire's private room, which was really his office, in the "Kalamazoo" flats. Maguire leaned back in his chair and looked across the table genially at his friend, thumbs in the armholes of his vest.

"Grady, what do you know? What are you hinting at?"

"Well, I can hardly tell you what I know. I merely want to put you on your guard. I've had some points in confidence from Bradley. I may tell you that if it hadn't been for him you were out of your office long ago. He's an honest man and likes to keep to a bargain made; but

there are those about him who are different—very different."

"Do you know that I've been ordered to run for alderman again in the district, to fill the vacancy made by giving a soft snap to Schmittalheimer?"

"I didn't know that, but I knew it was talked of. The truth is, I don't believe Bradley himself is aware of all that is going on."

"Of course he isn't. That's my objection to Bradley. He's an honest man, as you say, but he's just got no brains at all, at all. Those about him have neither honesty nor brains, and so they make better politicians. But when they meet a man who's got both brains *and* honesty, then they get left, d'ye see—a man like me, for instance."

"Don't be too sure of it, Pat. Go and see Bradley and the rest. Talk sweet to them. You can do it if you try. Get them to withdraw their notice to you. Don't refuse to run, for that's what they expect. That would give them the excuse they want for putting your head in the basket. But you palaver them, and get them to leave you alone. Remind Bradley of the bargain he made in my rooms. He'll stick by you if he can."

"It's too late, me boy. I've sent word that I'll do as they told me. I'm going to run for alderman."

"Then, Maguire, they've got you. Now let me give you a point or two. Don't try any tricks. You'll be watched, and they'll nab you. They'll make a great outcry about honesty from the inside—that's always popular—and they'll railroad you into State Prison."

"Yes, but what about my electioneering this last year or two, that you were complaining of a while since?"

"It won't do you any good, Pat. The word will go quietly out that you're to be defeated. A republican alderman more or less don't make any difference to them. You will have Tammany ostensibly for you, but actually against you. It's no use fighting Tammany, Pat; it has broken bigger men than you, and men that apparently had the city behind them. There's nothing for it but to go to the chiefs and talk them over if you can, although

that will not be easy now. Still I think you can do it if you put your mind to it. Above all, keep cool, and don't show fight. Don't let them make you angry. You can't treat Tammany as you did Rafferty."

"Grady, you're a good friend of mine, and I'll not forget it. I'm making a great study of Tammany, and I've been hard at it for years now, and, I tell you, John, it's interesting. Before I came to New York I thought Tammany was a unit. Instead of that I find it full of quarrels and bickerings and backbiting and plotting, half of them ready to cut the throats of the other half."

"Don't be deluded by inside ructions, Maguire. They're a unit when the enemy is at the gate, and that's enough for practical purposes."

"It isn't, Grady, as I think I'll show these boys before I'm through with them. Now I'll tell you another thing. I've resigned my office of inspector. I sent in me resign when I said I'd run for alderman, as is but right and proper."

Grady gave utterance to an exclamation of dismay.

"Why, Pat, how did you come to do that? You've handed over all they were plotting for before the fight began."

"They're welcome to it."

"I thought you were doing well. You live here in good style, and I know that can't be done on two thousand a year; they're beginning to suspect as much too."

"Let them suspect. The fight's beginning, as you said. Do you know what will happen if they beat me inside Tammany?—if they prove me I can't get along with this lot that's running the town?"

"No. What?"

"The republicans will be in the City Hall after next election."

It was now Grady's turn to sit back in his chair and stare across the table. Presently his amazement gave place to an amused smile.

"Well, Pat, I think much of you, as you know, but—excuse my asking, are you going to put the republicans in, or are you just making an election guess?"

"Oh, it's like this," said Maguire airily, waving his hand. "If I find need for the republicans in the City Hall, I'll put them there. It's easier done than trying to unite a working, fighting force within our own party. When Tammany goes to pieces, some one will pick up the bits, and I'll be the man. I've made up my mind that an educated gossoon like you would make an excellent mayor of New York, so I'll put you there."

"Thanks," assented Grady, with a laugh, "that would suit me down to the ground, for I don't mind admitting to you that I'm ambitions. But I hope you won't try it on the republican ticket. Seems to me I'd rather take my chances with the other crowd."

"That's all right. Now, John, you've been a good friend to me, as I've often said, and I'm not a man that forgets one kindness, let alone a hundred of them. I'm going to talk to you as I'd talk to no man living. You said you thought I was getting on well with the inspectorship. I was."

"Then why did you resign it?"

"Because it could be taken from me at any moment, and because I want something bigger. I'm ambitious, too."

"Still, I should have hung onto the smaller thing until I got the larger."

"Not when you've squeezed out all there's in it. Let another fellow take the place when people are about ready to squeal. Grady, just look at that book."

Maguire had unlocked an inner drawer and taken out a bank-book. He slid it across the table to his friend, who looked at it as requested, gave a whistle, and sent it back.

"More than thirty thousand dollars, eh? Well, that's not bad."

"No, but it's the smallest amount to my credit in one of six bank-books. I go well over the quarter million, my boy. What do you think of that? You see, if it costs a man ten thousand dollars to put up fire escapes in a big block, he is quite willing to give me three or four thousand to be let alone. But he won't do that every year, for it would be cheaper in the long run to order the

iron ladders. That's the trouble with the scheme. We want some plan that will give us these payments every year. You see what I'm driving at. I want New York."

"You've made up your mind to be Boss, then?"

"I have."

"I don't see how being defeated in the hundredth precinct is going to help you."

"Neither do I. When you don't know what to do, do the regular thing. That's what I'm doing. Tammany says 'run,' and I say 'Right you are, me hearties.' I obey orders. No fault can be found with that. If they defeat their own candidate, then they're showing a bad example that may turn up against them some day, and so they can't complain if the hoop they step on hits them on the knee. But besides all that, Grady, I'm just spoiling for a fight again. I'm longing for the excitement of an election. I've been piling up money for a while now, and it's but a quiet, monotonous business. I'm just lonesome for another chance of appealing to the suffrages of my fellow-citizens, and then I want to try an experiment."

"That's what I am warning you against, Maguire. They're going to watch you. I have that pretty straight."

"I want to try a new trick on them."

"It's dangerous. What's your game?"

"A square, honest election. If that doesn't paralyse the boys, I'm a bigger Dutchman than Jacob Schmuttelheimer."

CHAPTER II

"FORTUNE AND VICTORY SIT ON THY HELM"

MAGUIRE'S resignation of his office came with a shock upon the sachems of Tammany. The incident was unprecedented. No practical politician had ever given up anything he held, within the memory of man, unless he had been promised something better. They saw they were going to be quit of this interloper in easier fashion than had been anticipated. An humble recruit was all right enough in his way and was to be welcomed at any time, but a young fellow who had unexpectedly dropped from the clouds, demanding an office when already there were not enough places to go round among those who had earned them, was unbearable. The inspectorship once in the hands of a redoubtable worker belonging to the fold, they would give secret instructions for Maguire's defeat in the staunch hundredth ward, and thus be rid, once for all, of a grasping intruder. Besides, an underhand deal with the republican party would please that organisation, give it something to shout about, and add to the score of its secret indebtedness to Tammany, an obligation to be repaid a thousandfold when a general election was on.

Maguire accepted the situation with equanimity. His time was his own now, and he spent it largely with his humble friends in the precinct, anticipating his own defeat with great good-humour. "Yis; they're goin' to trow me down, Mike. They've no use fur the loike av me at aither of the halls, Tammany or the city. Av coorse, it's you that'll vote for me, it's well I know thot, an' it's little need there is for ye to tellut to me, an' I've many a good friend in the precinct forby, and these divils'll not shove me under so deep as they think. Ye see, I've been botherin' them too much for

me frinds. Yis; you're roite, Mike; Oi did trow in a word fur ye, an' good it is ov ye to remember it at this toime, an' glad I am that ye got the job, although a poor enough wan it was, an' it's a better wan ye'll get if ever Oi've the chanct to give it to ye. Ah, well, Mike, it's all in the day's work. It'll make no differ a hoondred years from now."

Maguire's brogue deepened and broadened in ratio with the accent of his listener. This change of dialect seemed to be automatic with him. He talked to Grady almost as correctly as if he had had that college education which he affected sometimes to despise and on other occasions to envy. He spent no money; he engaged no workers; he called no meetings; he made no speeches. His was the attitude of an already defeated candidate, but one who took his overthrow with philosophy and great good-nature, thanking God he still had his friends, and as long as they were left him he had nothing to complain of. The united opposition were lulled into a dangerous sense of security by the seeming inaction of the victim. They were watching for tricks which were not to be played on this occasion, and so time, opportunity and effort were wasted. Still it is doubtful if they could have defeated the popular Maguire by any combination they might have made, or any candidate they could have secured, much less with a silk-stockinged potentate from the richer portion of the city.

On election day Maguire took no chances; he worked like a newspaper man with a big late fire on his hands, and the particulars of the various insurances to be got before the forms were closed. Pat was everywhere, always with a joke on his lips and a good word to say even to those officials at the polling booths who were secretly against him. The republicans were anxious about this contest because state and presidential elections were drawing near, and if they could seat their man from a district so admittedly democratic, the general effect would be good. The Tammany chiefs cared little for the coming state election and nothing at all for the presidential. They were too secure of their position in the metropolis

to worry about one precinct going nominally against them.

When the returns came in, the republican candidate must have wondered why he had been running. Maguire had simply mopped the district with him, as the phrase went. Even the normal weakness of the republican vote in that district was a Goliath of suffrage compared with the puny total Maguire's opponent had received. There had been a snow-under, indeed, but it was the republican who was beneath the drifts.

For the next few days Maguire was a centre of interest for the newspapers. Reporters crowded his flat, and he was hail-fellow-well-met with every one of them. Object to be interviewed? Certainly not. He was a poor man; had spent no money; had no money to spend; but there was one thing he did have, and that was an unlimited faith in the people and in honesty. Be honest and put your trust in the people, and you are all right. The republicans may have had money; they usually had; he knew nothing about it in this case; he hoped the election had been as square on the other side, as it certainly was on his; but money was not all it was cracked up to be. He believed the mass of voters were incorruptible, and he thought he had done something to prove that contention. Then finally there was another thing he wished to say:

There was a faint rumour floating about that a deal had been arranged between Tammany and the republican party. The returns ought to show how groundless that libel had been. Tammany was not treacherous. He had had the hearty undivided support of Tammany, as the result showed. He had the honour of knowing personally the chiefs of that much maligned society, and they were to a man true to democratic principles and the democratic candidate.

This was pleasant reading for the official republicans, who knew there had been a deal, and already were more than suspicious that they had been betrayed. It was also pleasant reading for the officials of Tammany Hall, who dare not publicly deny the eulogies Maguire pronounced

upon them, and whose private assurances to the chiefs of the republican party were greeted with incredulous scorn. Maguire received a peremptory command from headquarters to keep his mouth shut when reporters were about, and he cheerfully obeyed, but the mischief was already done; the always latent distrust of Tammany's good faith had been aroused to full activity, which was very inconvenient with a big election at hand and important bargains to be made with suspicious opponents.

It was in John Grady's flat that the first meeting of the two friends after the contest took place. Maguire's unexpected return had been a technical triumph for Grady; he had warned the chiefs to conciliate this man and give him a chance. He had beseeched them to be fair with him. They had ignored both warning and supplication. Now Maguire, ostentatiously bowing to their commands, had actually defeated them single-handed in a strong citadel of their own selection. He had placed them in a situation where they could only squirm; where they dare not complain aloud even to their own friends.

"Well, Pat, you're a great man," cried Grady as the other came in.

"I told you I'd learn them boys something about elections," said Maguire complacently as he flung himself down in an easy chair.

"What's the next move, Pat? Are you going to march on the City Hall with your cohorts and demand recognition?"

"Divil a march and divil a recog. That gang's no good, John. There's nothing to be got from them, not even horse-sense. They've just gumption enough to hang on to their places, but not the horse-sense to get in out of the rain when they see a storm coming, as the old woman said. John, I'm going to turn the rascals out. Are you with me?"

"You mean you're going to turn republican?"

"Not a bit of it. Are you with me? That's the question. I'm in for the biggest throw of the game. The republicans will own New York for the next four years, an' it will be fun to watch them. They won't know in the least what to do with it."

"That's a large contract, Maguire. How are you going to work it?"

"Oh, it's easy. But answer my question. Are you with me?"

"Yes. Of course I'd like to know what you're going to do, or rather what you think you're going to do."

"Think nothing. I tell you what it is, Grady, you've got shaky on me this while back."

"You got shaky on yourself, apparently. You've been moping round saying you were a lost man. I gave you the best advice I could, and stood up for you with the Boss. I did what I could for you always. I knew there was a dead set against you at headquarters, and had been for years, and I saw that you seemed discouraged yourself, so what was a man to think? They'd have broken you long ago if it wasn't for the Boss, and he backed you up in a half-hearted way, largely on my account. You've won a trick in the game, Pat, but if you imagine you are out of the woods yet you're mistaken. Tammany never forgives and never forgets. Now, honestly, Pat, did you think yourself you were going to be elected, or was the result as much a surprise to you as to the rest of us?"

"Yes, I thought I was going to be elected, but I wasn't sure of it. It was an experiment, as I told you before. If the average man was true to his word I was elected; if he was a liar, I was defeated. That was the point I wanted to settle. I cared nothing for the aldermanship, one way or other, beyond that. John, I talk to you as I talk to no one else, and I'll tell you now that I've had four objects in life since I settled down in New York. The first is to be as good a husband to my wife as the Lord will allow me. She's the finest woman on earth, John, as you know, and I'm not fit to tie her shoes. I'm an honest man, but she goes far beyond me in honesty; indeed she has queer, unworkable notions on the subject; I had a little tiff with her on that before we were married, and it learnt me a lesson. By a merciful dispensation of Providence a woman is no good at figures. She knows my salary has been two thousand a year; it seemed immense to her when she first heard it.

Well, she's been spending five thousand a year right along, and it's never struck her how all that comes out of the two thousand, God bless her, and I hope it never will, although I've been worrying myself for one explanation after another, if the matter should happen to crop up. I was troubled a good deal about it at first, but when the boy and the girl came along, one after the other, her attention has been entirely taken up with the kids, and she has less thought of paper and pencil than ever she had. So my mind's easier on that score. My second object has been to get enough money scraped together that I could stand a few years of idleness, without me or my family being put to any inconvenience, and, as I showed you, that is accomplished. The third point was the study of Tammany from the inside. I'm convinced that Tammany can be defeated right along at every election, if the other party has the sense to go about the business in the right way. If Tammany only knew it, she needs me worse than I need her."

" You've got a good opinion of yourself, Patrick."

" I have. It's necessary in this world if you want to get along. The fourth clause is a study of the people. Can they be depended on? I think they can. I've been elected in what the righteous would call the most corrupt district in New York entirely on my shape. I've spent no money except for a little beer on a dry day, and I've beaten the secret opposition of the most powerful organisation in the state, and the open opposition of the second strongest. Am I speaking the truth?"

" You are, Pat. Well, what do you make of it all? Do you think organisation is no good?"

" Organisation is pretty nearly everything, but not quite. There are other ingredients, just as in the compounding of mixed drinks. If you leave one or two elements out of a cocktail you make a disgusting mixture instead of a delight to the palate."

" Come to the point, Maguire. Are you going to fight Tammany?"

" I am not."

" I thought you proposed to put in the republicans a while since."

"I do."

"Oh, I give it up. What's the answer?"

"Are ye convinced that they're no good down at the City Hall, that lot?"

"They're in power all the same."

"They are. I have waited two or three days to see what they would do. They sent me one message. Do ye know what it was? It was to the effect that Alderman Patrick Maguire was to hold his yawp. He wasn't to talk any more to them villainous reporters. And Pat answers humbly that he'll do what he's told. Now the reporters are a very decent lot of hard-working men, and I like them. They come in handy when useful misinformation is to be disseminated among a discriminating public. Now do you know what I'd have done if I was Bradley? The minute the returns were in and I saw how badly I got left, I'd a-shook the mugs that led me into the trap, and I'd a-come direct to Pat Maguire, and I'd a-slung one arm over his shouder. 'Pat, me boy,' I'd say, 'you're a daisy. I've tried to trip ye up,' I'd say, 'and I've planted me foot on me own nose, an' the swellin's painful,' I'd say. 'After this, Patrick acoushla, we'll try no more tricks on each other, for there's plenty of the enemy to experiment on. An' so, Patrick, me honey, come down with me to the City Hall; I've a nice little assortment of offices all laid out in a row, pretty an' regular like, an' ye'll take yer pick of the wan that best suits yer sedenthry habits,' I'd say. But instead of that there comes an order, 'Yer talkin' through yer hat; put yer hat on yer head, ye fool, an' snap a padlock on your lips.' There's no hope for you or me in that crowd, Grady. They haven't sense enough to pound sand. We've got to turn them out."

"Agreed; but how? If you're not going to fight them, what's your plan?"

"John, I couldn't do this thing alone. I need the help of one man, and that man is you. You are a member of the University Club, an' this club an' that club that wouldn't look at a gossoon like me. In other words, judge, you are in with the silk-stockinged brigade."

"Oh, you want *me* to turn against Tammany?"

"Nothing of the sort. These club jays must look on you as a lost sheep, and wonder why you soil your fingers with our kind of politics. They're awfully careful of their fingers, those fellows. That's why they'll never shake hands with a working-man except at election time. Verv well. The talk is all of politics in the clubs just now, I'm told, because the papers are howling about 'reform.' It's a lovely theme, and a good writer can work himself up on it till you'd think he was angry about something. Now you sit round in the club, nod your head and look wise and smile mysteriously now and then, and drop a hint casually that if they only knew how easy it was done they'd quit talking and do something. Then they'll ask your own question, 'How is it to be done?' Don't bite too readily. You tackle the republicans first. Get them to give you a list of the men they'll support at the head of the ticket, and tell them if they include two or three honest democrats, as they'll call them, it won't do no harm. Get another list from the county democrats and find out specially what decent republicans they'll support. The same from the German reform society, and every one of the other anti-Tammany leagues. All right. There'll be one or two, perhaps three, names common to all the lists. Try to get them to unite on the best man. They won't. He'll be touchy and will withdraw. There's not one of them wouldn't throw down the game if you don't come to him with the nomination in one hand and yer hat in the other. They'll all serve their country, but don't ask them to recognise a poor man on the shtreet between polling times. This is where delicate handling will be needed. There will be a hitch with the first man and the second, but very likely they may unite on the third. It's my hope he'll be some reform crank that'll enforce the laws and develop into the most unpopular man in the state four years from now, but any mugwump with good intentions will do. There's nothing like an upright, conscientious citizen, strong on reform and pure government, for turning the election over to the other party next innings. Will you do it, Grady?"

"I'll try my best, but I think you are the man for the job. Wouldn't it be better for me to arrange a meeting between you and these persons? I could accomplish that without any trouble."

"No, no. I could make no headway with them. I don't talk their lingo."

"There's nothing wrong with your lingo as far as I can discover, and you have a most persuasive tongue, Patrick."

"That's all right, John, but I know my failings, and that's where I have the advantage over Tammany. You do as I tell you, and keep me posted, while I stay in the background. This newspaper demand for reform will help things on a bit, an' begobs we'll give 'em reform till they're sick of the dose."

After much negotiation and various narrow escapes from shipwreck the numerous reform parties united and presented a solid front to their confident opponents. One stormy November day the country and the world beyond knew that Tammany had been crushed finally and for ever. It was a clean sweep; a famous victory. Much oratory was spent over it. The result showed that the great heart of New York was all right if you made the correct appeal to it. The newspapers justly prided themselves on their influence in bringing about so desirable an occurrence. New York was purged of her bad government and could now hold up her head proudly among the great cities of the world. Civilisation was not a failure and the Caucasian was not played out.

Inside Tammany Hall there was bitterness and vexation of spirit. Each faction blamed the other and all the others. The leaders were unanimous on one course of action only, and that was the emphatic cursing of the Boss. Bradley washed his hands of the whole turmoil and retired to his farm in northern New York, where his frugal savings insured him a life of ease and freedom from worry, leaving the Kilkenny cats to fight it out among themselves.

Was there a man undismayed? Yes, there was one. Patrick Maguire was true to his party throughout, and

he went down with the rest in the disaster that had overwhelmed it. His advice had been ignored and his warnings unheeded, and if ever there was a person who was justified in saying " I told you so," Patrick Maguire was that man. But he made no use of his opportunity. He talked in most friendly fashion with each of the leaders, who now were glad to have any one speak to them civilly when they had nothing to give away and were themselves bereft. It was a pleasure and also a rare event to meet a Tammany man who was not swearing. Maguire persuaded each patriot that if that patriot's advice had been followed things would have turned out differently. He was a mixture of soothing sirup and consolation, without a trace of malice in the draught. The leaders saw that they had been entirely mistaken in the young man and unjustly suspicious of him. In time of trouble kind words are more than coronets, and Maguire's well-proportioned flattery comforted many an aching heart.

" We treated ye durty, that's what we did. We turned ye down, or tried to, an' it's ashamed I am ov me own share in it, on a day whin there's few to give me the glad hand as you've done. An' I'll not forget it, aither."

But Pat would have no one blame himself. It was all right, he said cheerfully, and he was sure the speaker had very little to do with it, which the speaker would somewhat shamefacedly admit. It was all Bradley's doing.

In the moment of gloom following the election any one could have bought Tammany for thirty cents, a sum frequently mentioned by its adherents as bearing a marked resemblance to it. Maguire happened to have a quarter and a nickel in his trousers pocket at the time. During the immediate exasperation of a crushing defeat few people have the faculty of fixing their attention on some object four years ahead. Later on, when the future loomed up more distinctly in the distance and the bodyguard of the Tammany Tiger found that the animal was not so badly injured in the collision as had been generally supposed, they made an attempt to get into their old positions by its side.

Then they found that the genial Maguire had got a firm grip on the collar of the brute, and the great cat snarled dangerously if any one attempted to interfere with its keeper. And this was but natural enough. It was Maguire who had bound up the lacerated limbs and applied the healing lotion. When others had but kicks to bestow, his soothing hand smoothed the ruffled fur. He had been the first to declare that the accident was not fatal; that there was life in the old beast yet. Without opposition Maguire had somehow fitted himself into the place left vacant by the desertion of Bradley, and even when the post began to acquire renewed value there was no strenuous opposition to his occupancy, for sweet as nectar flowed the milk and honey of his promises. Every one knew him to be a yielding, pliant man, ever ready to do the bidding of the humblest; the one person in the organisation who had never rebelled; so there was no fear but that he might easily be ousted if it seemed desirable to put another in his stead. And so Maguire's grip on the collar became firmer and firmer. He spent all his time perfecting the organisation, keeping the older hands gently in the back seats, a task easier of accomplishment because there was little inducement for hard work, with no pay-day coming round. Why waste energy with no spoils in the foreground? Gradually but effectually he placed the young and enthusiastic in the vanguard, willing fighters who owed their positions entirely to him.

Meanwhile the Reform government had been doing famously. It enforced the laws without fear or favour, to the amazement of citizens, who had looked on various enactments as mere vote-catching caprices of former state legislatures, long since forgotten; enactments never meant for any practical purpose, and the shoe pinched multitudes of very estimable people. The City Hall was pure, and taxation slightly on the upward grade. The voters had intended the laws to be honestly applied, of course, but not against themselves. It was the other fellow they had been thinking of when they dropped their tickets into the ballot box. The New York *Evening*

Post showed by indisputable logic that the Reformers had redeemed their pledges and deserved well of the electorate, but the saloonkeeper on the corner took in a cheaper paper and so missed this excellent reasoning.

When the four years elapsed, Tammany was reinstated by an overwhelming majority, ex-Judge Grady was mayor of the city, and Patrick Maguire, holding no office either elective or nominative, was undisputed Boss of New York, as powerful as the czar within his own dominions, and as popular as Victoria was within hers.

CHAPTER III

"FIRE THAT SEVERS DAY FROM NIGHT"

IT is well that Psyche is not the patron of married women; the hot candle grease of too intimate curiosity might cause marital happiness to evaporate as does a fluff of gun-cotton under the torch of incandescent iron. Where ignorance is bliss, why experiment with the remainder of the phrase?

Mrs. Charlotte Maguire was not of an inquiring nature; she took the goods the gods sent her without question, and consequently was happy. Patrick proved a model husband, naturally of an affectionate disposition, with a firm belief that all women were innately better than all men. He devoted himself to his wife with the same ardour that he devoted himself to public affairs, and was therefore a success both as a husband and a politician. He knew that his wife was infinitely his superior in religious feeling and in moral principle, and he admired these qualities in her, which he would have considered of no use to himself in the everyday work of the world, as valueless as a pretty Japanese umbrella in a thunderstorm, as a silk gown in a blizzard. But, nevertheless, he protected her from all knowledge of his actions outside their flat. If a newspaper called him a thief he took care that the journal did not penetrate into his home. He saw to it that her friends were selected from classes little conversant with politics, and unlikely to disturb his wife's overwhelming belief in him. It must not be imagined that Maguire supposed himself engaged in anything nefarious. Far otherwise. He seemed to believe himself an honest man, and frequently intimated as much. In their early days his practical views had come into collision with her morbid conscientiousness, and he found it

impossible to make any headway against her utopian fancies.

Even then he had not tried for long to convert her to his own way of thinking, but had taken the line of the least resistance; had pretended to be a proselyte of hers, yet without depriving himself of the substantial benefits accruing from his own mode of action; he had accomplished the feat of having his cake and eating it as well. As a person living in the infected atmosphere of the city might regard an ethereal being habituated to the pure thin microbeless air of the mountain top, so Maguire regarded his wife; the medium she breathed was all very well for her, but it gave him palpitation of the heart and an overworking of the lungs. He knew that his arguments were most logical, but experience had taught him that they would not have been held valid by her, just as a borrower's note may be good, and yet is refused as collateral by a bank. So being a man who loved an easy frictionless life, who wanted to see all about him contented and happy, he took pains to render impossible an encounter—a conflict of opinion—the outcome of which was by no means certain.

Sometimes the more cynical Grady aroused him to eloquent anger by touching sarcastically on the methods that were enriching them both. A university education, Maguire frequently remarked, had tainted the virgin purity of Grady's native innocence. Grady had no delusions. He took the easy path to wealth because, like the proprietor of the shanty restaurant out West who charged five dollars for a ham sandwich, he needed the money, but he never tried to convince himself that he was a George Washington, although he loved to goad Maguire into a defence of the late William M. Tweed. However, the Boss cared little what any one said to him, if it were not said in the presence of his wife.

Lottie, from the first, took a keen delight in the pageantry of New York, and her husband was rarely too busy to be her attendant. A box at any theatre was his for the asking, and as he experienced a boyish joy in the performances, the two were frequent patrons of the

drama. The history of their domestic felicity would have been a most commonplace recital were it not for a disaster that came upon them with an unexpected suddenness, as if implacable Providence had determined to show how futile are the triumphs of man.

They were returning home from the theatre together one winter night, some three months after Maguire's great victory had placed him at the head of the city, when a fire engine dashed up the thoroughfare past them, leaving a trail of smoke and sparks behind it, vibrating the air with the harsh metallic clang of its gong. The sight was too common to attract attention, night or day, but Maguire, always interested in the department, asked a policeman where the fire was.

"I dunno, sir," answered the officer respectfully, recognising his questioner; "but it must be serious, for that engine's answering the second call."

They walked on still unsuspecting until the nearer they approached to their own street the more evident it became that the conflagration was in their neighbourhood.

"O, Patsey!" cried his wife, clutching his arm tightly, "what if it should be our—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Lottie. The building's fireproof, and there's all New York to burn besides it."

But he unconsciously quickened his pace. At the street corner, turning into a canyon of red light, a policeman, seemingly on the watch, stepped in front of the woman and addressed the man.

"Mr. Maguire, the Mayor has a closed carriage here for you; you're to drive to his flat."

"A closed carriage! What for?"

"For the lady, sir." Before he could explain further, Lottie, with a scream, sprang from them and dashed down the red street. Her husband tried to overtake her, and the officer, with a quick signal to the driver of the carriage, sped after them, coming up with Maguire, who gasped:

"Is it—is it the Kalamazoo?"

"Yes, sir, and a bad fire."

"Have any—how about—those inside?"

"Not many's got out, I'm afraid, sir."

On the margin of the dense crowd a mad woman was struggling with a stalwart policeman, who repelled her roughly.

"Turn back out of this!" he roared.

"Oh, my children! My children! My children!"

"Shut up your noise; there's more than yours there."

"Go slow, Jack," panted the other officer, "that's Mrs. Maguire."

The truculence of the first vanished at the sound of the name.

Maguire cast one despairing glance at the column of flame with its black coping of smoke, groaned, and tried to induce his wife to enter the carriage. She fought all three with incredible strength, and at last her husband picked her up bodily, she struggling, tearing at his face, screaming, "My children! My children!" and, thus demented, he forced her into the carriage. The man on the box needed no instructions, but drove quickly away out of the crimson glare and the heated atmosphere, throbbing with the pulsations of the fire engines.

"Oh, my children! Let me get to them! Coward, coward, how dare you take me from them? If you are afraid to go where they are, I'm not. Why do you stop me? I am their mother, their mother, their wretched, wretched mother!"

She tried to smash the rattling glass that had been drawn up. He caught her two wrists in his firm grip and held her helpless.

"O, Lottie, Lottie, Lottie," he groaned, "dear girl, hush. Hush, Lottie. We can do nothing—nothing but bear it."

"Nothing? I could have saved them if I had been there. I would have climbed down the naked bricks with them. Why did we live in that place? You said it was fireproof Why were there no ladders, that I might have gone up to them from the outside? Oh, that furnace—that furnace! It will burn in my brain forever."

"You're killing yourself, darling, and you're killing me." An iron clutch seemed closing in on his own breaking heart.

"Why did I leave them—leave them in another's care—my own—my very own flesh and blood—to others—and me, their mother—and—me—me—me, their mother, laughing in the theatre—a childless woman! O God, O God! I'm going crazy! Fiend of Heaven, give me back my children, or strike me mad—and quickly, quickly!"

And now it took all Maguire's giant strength to combat the demon in possession of his wife. Desperately she grappled with him, striving to throw herself from the carriage, and silently he overcame her, his fear of doing injury almost giving her the victory. At last her collapse was as sudden as her frenzy. She sank exhausted to the floor of the carriage, moaning, sobbing, gasping spasmodically, as near to the door of death as she would ever be until it opened to receive her.

The carriage stopped at last, and Maguire, carrying the senseless form of his wife into Grady's parlour, laid her on a couch. The owner of the flat was not in, but the servants had instructions and offered help, which was declined by Maguire, who asked to be left alone with his wife. He paced up and down the room, his face white, his lips set, resolutely keeping the mastery of himself, the silence disturbed by the accustomed street noises below and the subdued pitiful wailing of his wife. He could not trust his voice to offer such poor consolation as might be at his command, so walked and turned, and walked and turned. He felt dumbly the strangeness that New York should be going on much as usual, and the sound of a merry laugh beneath startled him as if it had been a scream.

At last Grady came in, opening the door softly and without knocking.

"My poor boy," he said in a half whisper, "this is awful. I suppose there is no chance that the children were away anywhere?"

"No. Is there any hope of them having escaped?"

"Not if they were in their rooms. No, don't think that," he said rapidly, rightly interpreting his friend's agonised look. "A fire escape would have been useless. The whole place was ablaze before one could turn

round, they tell me. It was like an explosion in its suddenness; some say there was an explosion. Nothing could have been done. Everything was like tinder with the winter heating. It's small comfort, but the worst was over in the twinkling of an eye."

"Did many get out?"

"No. I could hear no word of you, and I was afraid you—I saw no one that lived in the house, though I inquired through all the crowd. At last the policeman on the beat told me that you and Mrs. Maguire had gone out early in the evening, so I had him watch for you."

The prone figure on the couch took no notice, evidently knowing nothing of what was going on about her. Grady glanced at her uneasily now and then. He lowered his voice to a whisper again.

"How—how is she taking it?" he asked awkwardly.

"Very—hard. I'm afraid for her. She was—wrapped up in them," and for the first time Maguire's voice broke.

The other patted him helplessly on the shoulder.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Pat? Anything I can get? Shall I send a doctor up?"

"No, no; there's nothing here a doctor can cure."

"Well, I'll just leave you, then. I've a room at the Astor House. If you need me, send down at any hour. My man here will get you everything you want, everything you want."

"You're a good fellow, John. Some time I'll tell you —better than I can now—"

"That's all right, that's all right."

He stole out of the room as quietly as he had entered it; as if he were leaving a chamber of death.

CHAPTER IV.

"GOD'S WILL! WHAT WILFULNESS IS THIS?"

THERE was no recurrence of the frenzy which had, for a time, made the bereaved woman a maniac on the night of the fire. After a prolonged period of quiet exhaustive weeping, Lottie sank, a wan shadow of her former self, into a profound melancholy from which it seemed impossible to arouse her. Maguire devoted himself to his wife, always kind, soothing, thoughtful, and she accepted his constant ministrations with indifferent lassitude. If his unremitting care had no effect upon her in one way or another, it at least performed the retroactive purpose of assuaging his own deep grief, an office which unselfish usefulness to others frequently fulfils.

"It's the woman that suffers," he would say, although his own mirthless uncertain smile gave token that the woman did not suffer alone.

He took her West, hoping that the scenes of her girlhood would work an improvement upon her spirits, and she went with him, showing neither reluctance nor eagerness. The change, however, had the opposite effect to what had been anticipated. Here she had returned with her first baby, then with her second. Here the children had played with their delighted grandparents, frolicking about the place with delight in its freedom and its scope; rejoicing in the unaccustomed liberty of the farm, the woods, the puddling stream, and here— "O God," she cried, as she wandered aimlessly about, following their traceless footsteps, "here they would have been safe!"

Every bush and gate and path brought them more vividly to her distracted mind, and it seemed impossible that they were actually obliterated from the green earth, leaving not a shadow behind them; not even a grave on its flowery bosom to weep over. Like an unquiet ghost she haunted their former retreats, and once coming upon

a deserted open shed she was startled by the swaying of a rope-swing their grandfather had put up for them, and undisturbed, in a corner, the little assortment of broken crockery that had been the girl's playhouse. The stricken woman sank to the ground, laid her head against the wall and wept despairingly.

The farm was a place of unrest to Maguire. He strode over its broad wintry fields bare of snow, not knowing what to do with himself; his feet yearning for the pavement; uncaring for the sward. Letters and telegrams urged him to return; things were going badly in his absence; faction was reviving; bitterness in debate, and revolt in counsel. The hand of the master was needed, and that hand clenched and unclenched as he read, itching to be once more at the rudder-bar. Bradley had returned, and the old gang, now subordinated, was gathering round him. Maguire laughed sardonically as he perused his correspondence; when the gods got back the half-gods would go, and that speedily. He might lose New York, but he could not risk losing his wife, nor would he desert her in her affliction.

Once, on the arrival of his letters from the East, he sprang upon a horse and rode hot-foot to Ypsilanti; sent forward a telegraphic message to New York, short, sharp, authoritative. It ran:

"Bounce Donovan and Schwab, and put Logan and O'Keefe in their places.

"PATRICK MAGUIRE."

It was literally and figuratively a stroke of lightning, and it shattered two officials in high places, who, puffed with newly acquired pride, had come to fancy that each was "a bigger man than old Maguire." The two supposed the heavens would fall if they were meddled with, but the heavens stood, and their adherents fell—away from them. They were now but two private citizens in a metropolis numbering more than a million such, with nothing to give away, and all through fourteen words, deadhead at that, for the telegraph company did not require Patrick to pay for his messages; a truly amazing result, understandable as the ukase of a despotic king,

but a miracle in a democracy, when performed by a man holding no office, responsible to none for his actions. Peace and dumb terror reigned in Tammany, for Maguire had struck high and struck hard.

"That was magnificent," wrote the Mayor. "I would never have had the courage to do it. I should have feared disobedience in the first place, and a split in the second. But there was no hesitation in action, although you were hundreds of miles away, and now those two haven't a corporal's guard following them. There is no split, nor sign of it. Come back as soon as you can. All you need to do is to walk up Broadway and the opposition will climb a tree."

But Maguire stayed on, although he chafed under inaction and loathed his surroundings. His wife gave no sign that she wished to quit her environment, and until she did he would not budge. He suspected that the visit was doing her little good, but he was at a loss to propose a substitute for it. He distrusted the return to New York and its effect upon her. She made no complaint and no suggestion, and seemed to care but little for his company, so he roamed the fields and the woods, avoiding his kind, communing with himself alone.

The only occasions during which a spark of spirit came to Lottie's eyes were when some visiting neighbour was announced, who came solemnly to offer condolence; friends and acquaintances of her maiden days paying the visits that were expected by all properly brought up persons in the circumstances. These she met at the urgent solicitation of her mother, and received in silence, with downcast eyes, the conventional consolation they had to offer. The clergyman in whose congregation she had sat all her girlhood days was away from home when she came to the farm, and his pastoral call upon his return was of necessity belated.

"I shall not go in and see him," she protested to her persuading mother. "I am heartsick of all this talk, talk, talk. What does he understand?"

"He is a good man, Lottie, dear. He can do you no harm, if he does you little benefit."

"Oh, it's easy to be good when you have nothing to fear."

"Come in with me, darling; it will be only for a moment, and I won't ask you to see any one else, if you don't want to."

So at last the black-garbed woman entered the parlour where her reverend friend was waiting. He took her limp unresisting hand and expressed the great sorrow he had felt when he read of her bereavement.

"But these burdens, laid upon our shoulders by an ever merciful God, though grievous to bear at the time—"

She drew her hand away from his.

"—are for our ultimate regeneration, and will be looked back upon even by ourselves as a dispensation to be regarded as a necessary chastening; as an all-bountiful mercy which—"

"Never, never, never," she cried.

"My child, I am old, and have in my calling seen much of sorrow and—"

"Then, sir, it has taught you little."

"It has taught me to receive with bowed head, in a contrite spirit, the ordinances of a just, unchanging God—"

"A just God? Do you wish me to believe that He is the murderer of my innocent children? Do you mean that He—with unrestricted all-pervading power, power without limit—that He, to change my hard heart, if it needed changing, must wreak His vindictive vengeance on the blameless, must crush my beating heart under His cruel heel? Then such a demon God I curse and defy."

"My dear Mrs. Maguire, you know not what you say," gasped the horror-stricken minister.

"O Lottie, Lottie!" cried her amazed, terrified mother.

"I'll have nothing of your God—a man-made God, with all man's worst vices, eternally omnipotent. Not a criminal that walks the streets but is better—nobler than He, as *you* describe him. Let Him give me back my darlings and I will worship Him; yes, crawl to Him,

which is what His tyrant spirit asks. Let Him beg my forgiveness for the agony He has made me suffer—and I will forgive Him—if I can. But now—now—to ask me to bow my head to Him—to worship Him—He who has torn my babies from me—whose warm, naked little bodies I have pressed loving to my breast—to leave me—to leave me without a handful of ashes in all that ghastly heap, that I can call theirs—oh—oh—"

She ran shrieking from the room, her auditors silent and dumfounded. Poor Mrs. Byfield, hesitating between fear that her daughter would harm herself, and fear that the offended, outraged minister would spread such awful heresy about the world, stood irresolute.

"She is distraught," said the clergyman in a trembling whisper. "Look at her. It will pass in time—pass in time—"

"You will say nothing—"

"Oh, not a word; be sure of that," but the good man told his wife, and she, in confidence, of course, spoke to cherished friends; thus the neighborhood came to know that life in a city is demoralising.

Maguire coming down the long lane that led from the barns to the forest, saw his wife running toward him, her dishevelled hair flying behind her in the wind. Curiously enough his first thought was—something has happened to the children—then he remembered, and the dull weight sank again upon his heart. With a sigh he hurried forward to meet her.

"Oh, Patsey! Patsey!" she cried, flinging herself into his arms, resting her throbbing head upon his shoulder, using again the old name; "Oh, Patsey, Patsey, take me away from this place. I can stand it no longer."

"Anywhere you like, my dear," he said, caressing and smoothing her tangled hair.

"At once, Patsey; this very moment."

"Could you go back to New York, now?"

"Oh, New York, yes; where else? My heart is in that ash heap in New York."

"Yes, darling; it's true what you say; an' mine's there with it."

So they returned to New York.

CHAPTER V

"WHAT TELL'ST THOU ME OF ROBBING?"

IT is more than likely that nothing new has been thought, spoken, written or done these five hundred years past. The Lord only knows how many centuries have elapsed since the last original idea was put forth; the last original action accomplished. The human brain is at once so industrious and so limited in scope that it must have exhausted, very early in the life of the race, all the initiative material with which it was permitted to deal. Since then we have been rethinking dead men's thoughts; reiterating their words; inventing their marvels anew; travelling around a well-trodden circle, but adding a touch of humour to the treadmill task by believing we are doing it all for the first time; that the others whose footprints we are obliterating were a pitifull lot in comparison with ourselves.

Maguire, now returned, and in his element once more, imagined that his plan for the partial looting of a great city was new. His theory was that the business man would pay for being left alone, just as a Russian, racing for life across the snow, will throw to the wolves whatever he may have with him, piece by piece, as the price of his own safety. Nowhere else on earth was the race for wealth so keen, so universal, as in New York; nowhere, therefore, could the wolves expect such pickings as would be thrown to them, did they but snarl at the iron-shod runners of the sledge. But the barons of the Rhine had done all this centuries before; the merchants paid them good money to be left alone. In certain Italian provinces the boss of the district sat at the receipt of customs and collected unauthorized taxes from people who wished to live a quiet life; taxes

much more promptly paid than those expected by the regular government. Even in his benefactions to the poor, Maguire was not original, for Robin Hood lightened the purses of the well-to-do, and distributed silver among the needy, taking care that his own wallet became fat in the process.

Although Maguire, if hard pressed, would defend the principles of William M. Tweed, he had nothing but scorn for the clumsy methods of his predecessor. Tweed had stolen millions; Tweed had left behind him falsified records, cheques that could be traced, robberies with a trail in the rear. He was unfit to be a Tammany man, for the red Indian chief who gave name to the organisation had certainly slunk through the dense forest noiselessly, leaving no footprint, no broken twig, to mark his course.

It would be libellous to say that Maguire was a thief. Like some of our beneficent charities, he was supported by voluntary contributions. You did not need to pay a penny to any of his numerous satellites unless you wished to do so. Then why pay?

We will take the case of a saloonkeeper on the corner. The law requires him to close his premises at certain hours, and to keep them closed on Sundays and at other stated times during the year. The human throat has been constructed without regard to the calendar, and one of its peculiarities happens to be that it is as likely to become as thirsty on Sunday afternoon as it was the previous Wednesday. Hence a demand for alleviation. Consequently Sunday trade is brisk and profitable, because there are more dry throats about the streets that day than on any other. The saloonkeeper refuses to pay. Very good. He shall respect the law, which is also very good. A policeman—an incorruptible officer, who scorns the surreptitious glass of beer—parades in front of the saloon. He does not need to say anything. The thirsty throats pass him by and go to the next place. This makes all the difference between profit and loss to the saloonkeeper, and there is a touch of opera bouffe about the business. Imagine him attempting to complain that he is compelled to abide by the law! What are

the police there for but to accomplish that very object? The stricken beer merchant may proclaim that other shops are allowed to remain open. Are they? It is easy to make rash assertion, but difficult to supply legal proof. The thirsty throats cannot be expected to turn state's evidence upon the man who kept an oasis in the desert, and there can be no other witnesses. But even if a man could summon up proof strong as Holy Writ, it would have little effect upon a judge owned by the organisation which exacted tribute. It needs no ghost from the grave to show us that there are exactly one of two things to do—shut up shop or pay the sum expected.

Still, after all, law-breakers are a small minority in any community. The bulk of the people desire to make their living as honestly as may be. What, then, of those reputable dealers who respect the law and hope rigidly to abide by it? They also have two courses before them. They may set aside a fighting fund, of necessity much larger than any sum exacted from them by the party in power, engage an expensive lawyer and defend themselves from court to court, ultimately victorious, perhaps. Or they may pay blackmail and work in peace.

Some communities have a genius for law-making, others a sensitiveness regarding the keeping of laws they already possess, but the two qualities rarely run neck and neck. It is soothing to the conscience, conducive to a feeling of self-righteousness, to place a good law on the statute book. It is like a man paying a debt by giving his promissory note for it, and having the burden thus off his mind. "There," he says virtuously, "*that's* settled." The statute books bristle with excellent, wholly unnecessary enactments, which would be as annoying as wasps if they possessed the activity of those insects; but, thank goodness, they slumber where the legislature placed them and pester not a patient public. However, let some well-meaning, impracticable, meddlesome person stir up this hive of wasps with a stick—this quiescent multitude, each with a sting of penalty in its tail—and the public will roar with anger. Logically, the public

should smother the wasps, but it does no such thing; it promptly slaughters the man with the stick. Thus reform administrations invariably wreck themselves. They probe about with a poker. They say to themselves, "These laws were made to be kept," and they proceed to see that this is done. Then they rise dazed the morning after election and wonder who hit them on the head with a ballot box.

But a judicious keeper of the hive may do much effective work with it. He takes a dormant wasp and slips it under the collar of a busy man absorbed over his desk. There is a yell of pain, an instant ceasing of work—a strict attendance upon the wasp.

"Why did you do that?" wails the victim of the sting.

An outstretched upturned palm is the answer.

"Then you won't do it again if I pay?"

"Certainly not," is the reply. "What are we here for?"

Now this victim alone cannot slaughter the keeper of the hive; it requires the whole community to do that. But the whole community has not been stung; only one stubborn individual here and there. Even the individuals do not know one another and cannot act together, for each secretes the sting he has received, does not talk about it, and is mainly anxious that he shall not be called upon to endure another. So the keeper of the dormant wasps has things pretty much his own way as long as he does not let loose the whole hive.

Even if the wasps prove stingless, they are, nevertheless, annoying under a shirt. A merchant may find that his delivery vans are obstructing the street; that his employees have left a bale of goods too long on the public sidewalk; that his premises are dangerous and need to be remodelled for the general safety. All these charges may prove baseless, but the annoyance and expense of refuting them are as palpable as the indictments are unreal. All the fundamental machinery of the law is in the hands of his persecutors: the police are theirs; the subordinate judges belong to them. What, then, is a sensi-

ble, practical business man to do? Vote anti-Tammany? Of course he votes anti-Tammany—that is, if election day happens to be fine; November weather has a habit of being the reverse, and a man is not expected to endanger his health hanging about a polling booth in a wind-swept winter street. Then again, he may not have the time to vote, for it must be remembered that the holiday trade is then at its briskest, and a man cannot well leave it to the hands of others. Finally, what is the use of one vote, anyway? A contest is rarely lost or won by a single vote, so let us spend election day making some more money!

It must not be supposed that the American is wise in business and a fool in politics. He is successful in whichever branch he takes up, but he does not divide his energies by attempting both at once. McAllister was triumphant in business; Maguire was a conqueror in politics. The business man seems a failure in politics simply because he hasn't the time to devote himself to it. He cares little about power for its own sake; merely as a means to an end, usually expressible in dollars. But when a business man thinks it worth while to lav down his work and take up the cares of government, he makes the regular politician wish he had selected another occupation, for regular politicians are necessarily possessed of limited brain power. No capable man can afford to bother with the uncertainties of public favour; the prizes of commercial or professional life are too huge for existence to be frittered away catering for the popular vote. The business man may not be able to elect himself president, but there is at least one instance on record where he cast his eye over eighty millions of people, selected a politician from among them, and made that politician chief of the greatest nation on earth.

Here, then, at the feet of the victor, Maguire, lay the conquered country, rich as a rajah's province of Golconda, powerless as Hungary under Marshal Haynau. Heretofore the vicious and the lawbreaker had always contributed fitfully to the coffers of the party in office; now Maguire flung wide his net over just and unjust

alike. He brought a sort of rough equity to bear on the business, fitting the burden to the back compelled to sustain it, allotting exaction with some sense of proportion to the extent of traffic that was to produce it. Not even the foreigner escaped, and Europe winced when Maguire squeezed. Great steamship companies, with stock owned in part by emperors and kings, paid tribute to the uncrowned monarch, surely a reversal of former episodes, and thus in a measure, not foreseen by the poet, did the New World right the wrongs of the Old. Maguire liked to see those about him happy, and they were. Gold passing from hand to hand loses by attrition, thus bankers weigh rather than count. No man living could say with truth that he had bribed Maguire, yet this autocrat, holding no office, drawing no visible salary, grew rich in money, in houses, in lands. Improvements happened to be inaugurated where his town lots lay, values increased like magic, gold bred gold. The island of Monte Cristo was a mere penny bank in the Mediterranean compared with the island of Plutus at the mouth of the Hudson.

CHAPTER VI

"TURNS INSURRECTION TO RELIGION"

IF Maguire prospered in the work of his life, his domestic affairs were far from being to his satisfaction. His wife seemed unable or uncaring to throw off the deep melancholy that oppressed her. When they returned together from their disappointing visit to the Western farm, he hoped that house-hunting would offer a distraction peculiarly acceptable to a woman, but she showed little interest in the search; expressing no preference for one locality over another. Maguire had taken her to the palatial Windsor Hotel, where he had secured a suite of rooms on the second floor, and from that point as a centre he spent what time he could spare from his business in looking for a more permanent abiding place. Lottie, however, appeared as satisfied to stay where she was as to go elsewhere. So the Windsor being convenient for Maguire, the quest for a house was abandoned when he saw his wife remained indifferent about the matter. In fact he became aware that the pursuit brought back vividly to her clouded mind the disaster which was the cause of their seeking, and he quietly relinquished the task until time should have blunted the poignancy of bereavement. He imagined also that she might perhaps be wooed into forgetfulness the speedier among the bustling scenes of a great caravansary than in the comparative seclusion of a private dwelling. But as time went on no improvement manifested itself; rather the opposite, for Lottie became more pale and wan, more evidently weary of the world, until Patrick, with a sickening sinking of the heart, began to fear he would lose wife as well as children. He told her, with assumed glee, how rich he was becoming—real estate spec-

ulations, tremendous advances in railroad property—but her whole interest in the accumulation of wealth had been that her children should not need to work so hard as he had done, and now, when they were gone, of what use was this piling up of bonds and stocks?

Maguire had much faith in Christianity; he thought religion a good thing—for a woman—and he urged her to come to church with him. He was not a professed adherent of any sect, being extremely liberal in his religious opinions. He was willing to join any congregation in the city on the chance of one sermon or another supplying the consolation his wife so greatly needed, but she steadfastly refused to accompany him. Deep down in his heart, unconfessed, perhaps unknown even to himself, was a lingering affection for the old faith in which he had been brought up as a boy. No patient, mild-eyed nun ever sought in vain a contribution from Maguire; no priest with some needed mission on his mind but left the Boss with the mission funds substantially increased.

One day, to Lottie's surprise, a priest called upon her, a venerable, scholarly man, a courtier in manner, a gentleman in speech and bearing. Now such is the inconsistency of human nature that, although Lottie had somewhat rudely thrown away the religious tenets of her youth as a broken staff which had failed her in time of need, she nevertheless retained deep down in her mind the prejudices which that belief, as it was taught to her, had inculcated, and among these prejudices was a horror of what she termed Romish error. She greeted the reverend father coldly, and he was quick to see that he made no headway with her. He had more tact than the Western clergyman, however, and diplomatically forbore to labour a point when he perceived that his listener showed signs of impatience. He took his leave with a suavity of farewell which gave no hint of a knowledge that his embassy had failed, for the time being at least.

"Was it you sent that priest here to-day, Patrick?" she asked of her husband later.

"Oh, did the reverend gentleman drop in? I'm glad of that. He's an old friend of mine, a good man who can tell a good story with the best of them. I hope you liked him."

"Patrick, I believe you are a Catholic at heart."

"Who? Me? Not a bit of it. I keep an open mind on the subject, like a mugwump voter between elections. As far as religion is concerned, I resemble that Western man who said he was a Methodist, but hadn't been working at it lately. That's how it is with me. Truth to tell, if I wanted to meet my forefathers in the next world, and I'm not sure I do, for it's mighty little they left me in this one, it's in the Roman fold I'd have to go, for that's where they all were, right enough. No, Lottie, I'm no Catholic; maybe I'd be a better man if I was."

"Oh, you're a good man, Patsey, but I cannot understand how sensible people bring themselves to believe in purgatory."

"Is it purgatory? Well now, Lottie, there's a word or two to be said for that same device. You see the Protestant churches are all one thing or the other. It's either you're a saint in heaven, or t' hell wid ye. Now there's a powerful waste of good material there, to my way of thinking. Take an ordinary every-day sort of man like myself, for instance. I know I'm plenty good enough for New York, but I'm not that conceited as to think I'm just fit for heaven at a moment's notice. On the other hand, I don't know that I'm bad enough to take any real enjoyment out of the bottomless pit. Besides, it will be full of mugwumps anyhow, and that's no kind of society for the like of me. Now a Baptist preacher would have no hesitation; he'd burn me up for ever and ever. I don't think that would be quite fair. But the priest would say to me, 'Come on, Pat, and we'll smelt out of you all these little discrepancies that are very useful in New York, but for which there's no call at all at all in Paradise, and when that's done you can take your robe and trot upstairs.' It's just like a man going into a Turkish bath and coming out a clean citizen with a white sheet round him. There's a com-

mon-sense ring about the proposal that seems to appeal to a plain man like myself, but that's not to say I'm a Catholic at all, for I'm not—that is, as far as the returns are in at present."

The discussion ended here, for Patrick had it all his own way with no opposition from his wife, who sat gently swaying back and forth in her rocking chair, her hands folded in her lap, her saddened eyes gazing into the past. Patrick sighed as he recognised the usual hopeless attitude, and saw that she was not even listening to what he said.

Spring passed and summer was again upon them, its hot breath suddenly transforming New York into a huge oven. People took to sleeping in the parks, on the doorsteps, on the housetops, and those who could, fled to cooler regions.

"What do you say to Atlantic City, Lottie? I can give you Newport if you like. Which shall it be?"

"It's all the same to me, Patsey."

"Then Atlantic City it is. I hate Newport; it's a snobbish place, but Atlantic City is democracy let loose, especially when a dozen excursions come whooping in. You'll see the hoy polloy—which sounds like Irish, but Grady tells me it's Greek—bathing there in thousands, and they don't charge a cent for tramping along the Board Walk. I think for true enjoyment there's nothing like Atlantic City unless it be Coney Island."

"It will suit me if it suits you, Patsey."

"It suits me down to the ground, or down to the sand, rather. When they talked of foolish men building houses on the sand, Atlantic City had not been thought of; they tell me town lots have gone up something awful these last few years. I think I'll invest in two or three waggon loads of sand and, if it doesn't blow away, I'll make me fortune. The place is only two hours from New York and I have a pass on the road, so I'll be contented, especially as there's a telephone and a telegraph office in the basement of the hotel; for the price of power in politics is eternal vigilance, as somebody else said about something else."

Lottie made no reply to his flippant remarks, but the lids slowly drooped over her eyes, and he saw two tears trickle from under them, and knew well what brought them, for heretofore her summers had been spent on the home farm in Michigan, and now this was not to be talked of. He tried to whistle the latest street tune, but there was a catch in his own throat, so he turned away as from a problem that baffled him. What to do with this apathetic, uncomplaining, sinking woman, so different from the joyous girl he married, and yet more dear to him than even she had been, he did not know.

At an immense hotel, end on to the sea, the other extremity extending far up town, he secured rooms on the first floor, with a private balcony overlooking the ocean, the trampling Board Walk on stilts stretching in front, the waves running up the smooth sand underneath at high tide. They were in the midst of a city of tinder, pine and paint; a town of kindling wood; a temptation to Providence or to the devil who holds a torch. Let a careless light, a high wind and the psychological moment coincide, and Atlantic City will be a trace of ashes on the sand; a cloud of smoke in the horizon; a smell of rosin in the air. Here thousands of gladsome folk feasted and danced, and paced the Board Walk, giving no thought to the morrow or the lurid midnight that might intervene. Along the Board Walk Vanity Fair had set its booths: on the land side, shows, shops, theatres, restaurants, picture galleries, shooting ranges, mineral water stands (as many glasses as you please for five cents, arctic cold), soda water fountains, ice-cream tables, whirligigs and what not in unbroken line; on the water side here and there, covered pavilions with seats, and here and there spindle-shanked piers jutting out into the ocean, surmounted by mammoth buildings, where pleasure reigned supreme at from ten cents to a quarter. Who could fail to find enjoyment in such a place?

One at least moved among the throng, patient with it all but indifferent. Wherever she took her slow way through the wide hall, extending from end to end of the

long hotel, or on the broad veranda surounding it, place was silently made for her; the most luxurious rocking chair was unobtrusively put at her disposal; for America is the home of delicate courtesy, and a woman finds all men her servants. It had become known that this sad-faced lady, so young and yet with a glimmer of silver in her abundant hair, was a sufferer from that almost-forgotten tragedy of the winter before in New York, and a respectful sympathy followed her footsteps.

Maguire himself was now here, now there, now somewhere else. Eager and enterprising reporters came dashing from New York only to find that he had passed them on the fast train going east. The Philadelphia papers arrived early each morning at Atlantic City, but Pat had no interest in them. He didn't mind what they said; they were out of his jurisdiction; but he grasped the first New York sheet almost before the boy had cut the string of the ungainly bundle which the expressman heaved in through the basement window next the news stand. At other times Maguire was the lavish customer of the telegraphic youth, whose counter and clicking instrument were adjacent to the mountainous assortment of paper-covered literature. Or when the Boss was not telegraphing, there might be visible through the heavy bevelled plate glass window of the telephone cabinet a section of his broad back, thick neck and powerful, close-cropped, cannon-ball head.

On one occasion the comparative quiet of this rather select hotel was disturbed by the invasion of a delegation from New York who wanted to see the Boss; men loudly dressed, with hats on the bridges of their noses, and cigars tilted skywards; incongruous amidst these surroundings, knowing it, and trying to carry it off with a swagger; elbows out-thrust, and a pugilistic air in their walk. A general what-have-you-got-to-say-about-it attitude distinguished them. They wondered why Pat had taken up his quarters in a hotel that hadn't a bar, but thev made up for the deficiency elsewhere. And Maguire was in his element among them, knew where the best liquid was to be had, and would as soon see them

draw a revolver as a purse while he was with them. He called them all by their Christian names, and would neither give nor receive the title of "Mr." He was genial and friendly, confidential now with this one, now with that, and when they departed each felt that he had been specially marked out as sharing the inner thoughts of the Boss. Each looked upon himself as being the chosen repository of secrets regarding the difficulty of Maguire's position, his desire to do the right thing all round and, if none of them got exactly what he wanted, except in the way of drinks, all got something, if it was only an assurance of favours to come. Every man in the delegation believed he would have been the one selected could the Boss have had everything his own way, which it seemed was not yet the case. They called him Boss, but Maguire insisted there was no Boss; he was only an adviser, and sometimes his advice was neglected. They gave him a tiger's yell as their special car, like themselves, loaded with whisky, pulled out from the long shingled shed called the depot, and he stood on the platform waving his handkerchief at them; then he went to the nearest Western Union office and telegraphed Grady for Heaven's sake to keep those mugs at home if he could.

Yes, Patrick, these were your busy days, and most deftly did you pull the wires. No man could have moulded more diplomatically the crude material with which you had to work. Important, too, these large affairs, craftily dealt with; the concerns of the metropolis of the western world, with no thought of the city's good hampering your designs; a fowl to be plucked; but, gently, so that the bird might not be goaded to scream too loudly, or peck at the stripping hand.

Nevertheless, nearer to you than all these things, there is need for caution. Walk warily and think deeply, for this matter is saturated with the essence of life or of death. Look to your wife, and that not through the fumes of bourbon, but through the clear medium of truth and understanding.

Her mind may be likened to one of those emerald pas-

tures of sweet grass among which she spent her childhood. It has been rudely torn by the ploughshare of calamity, burying the greensward from sight, and turning to the air rough brown clods on which the eye rests with dismay. But the preacher spoke truth, however scornfully his trite maxims were received. Time is the great assuager. The frosts of grief have disintegrated the clods; the gentle rain of tears has loosened the stubborn lumps; the field is still brown, but the mould is ready for the sower. Now is the time for your preacher or your priest. Even if none such arrive, the hidden grass will reappear; but if a sower come, beware that the seed be true, and of honest culture.

"Patsey, did you see those Shakers down in the hall?"

"No. What are they shaking for? Drinks?"

The silence and the look of reproach brought Maguire to his senses, and he resolutely shook himself free of the muddling influences of his hospitality.

"Don't mind me, Lottie, my dear, I'm always talking through my hat when I get the chance. To tell the straight truth, Lottie, I've been round so much with them tanks from New York that it's a wonder I can see anything; s' truth. I passed the hotel twice without noticing it. I wouldn't have been in now if I hadn't stumbled against it; it was a doorstep that happened to be cluttering my feet, and so, as the elevator was sober, I managed to get up here. It is the Shakers ye'r talking about? What are they? Is there any difference between them and the Quakers?"

"The Shakers do not believe in marriage; the Quakers do; that's one difference."

"Ah, then the Shakers can count me out. I'll not join them. I'm a Quaker, I am. And I can save them the price of a passage to Cork, for they'll never convert the Irish nation to any such doctrine, I can tell them that. We Irishmen are too fond of our wives and our—"

He checked himself, stretched out his feet and gazed at them. His wife sighed and looked at him with liquid eyes, but went bravely on.

"Two of these Shaker women have a room on the office floor, where they sell things made by the community—cloaks, dressed dolls, work baskets, all in gay colours, while they themselves are dressed so soberly. Such dove-like women, with low, soft voices; it is a pleasure with a touch of melancholy in it to hear them say so gently and quaintly 'thee' and 'thou' and 'yea' and 'nay.' They were so restful and soothing and at such peace with all the world that it seemed to me if they would but press their cool, healing hands on my brow it would stop its aching and throbbing."

"Let's have these wemen up here at once," cried Maguire, starting unsteadily to his feet.

"No, no, dear. They are busy. They have to market their goods for the benefit of the Shaker community."

"They'll never sell quicker than when I'm with them. I'll buy their whole outfit and pay double prices for it; yes, and send the conglomeration to the poorest district in New York and distribute it where it will do the most good. Come along down and introduce me."

"Not to-day, Patsey."

Maguire was quick to see the imputation, although his wife had striven to keep all hint of it from her tone. Many another man would have resented it, but he replied in subdued voice:

"All right, all right, Lottie. Just as you say, my dear."

He walked with somewhat excessive erectness to the window and looked out at the ocean, muttering to himself:

"Maguire, ye drinking brute. I'd club the head off ye if I got ye outside. Ye'r not fit to speak to her, an' ye know it."

They went down next day, but the Shakers had gone and a commercial traveller from Boston occupied the room.

CHAPTER VII

"AND SWEET RELIGION MAKES A RHAPSODY OF WORDS"

At the cityward end of the hotel was an ample dining-room, and from this there ran the whole length of the building a spacious hall, like a broad, straight river, widening into a lake at the office, and opening out into several bays as it proceeded to the ocean, bays that were sub-parlours, furnished, one in the Japanese style, another with Turkish divans and pearl inlaid octagonal tables, handy for coffee cups. At last the hall debouched into a considerable drawing-room in which stood the grand piano. The banks of this direct canal were lined with palms and flowering plants, and the whole runway was a lounging place, replete with cane rockers and easy chairs of every imaginable variety. In the office enlargement there was always more or less of a throng, especially when letters were delivered and trains from New York or Philadelphia arrived. The carpets everywhere were thick and soft and of subdued hue; good engravings and etchings lined the walls, with here and there an oil painting or water colour, but the air of luxury and comfort culminated in the drawing-room. This capacious apartment had several windows and one that was notable—a magnificent sheet of plate glass of such limpid translucency that more than one newcomer, unconsciously imitating Alice's treatment of her looking-glass, had been tempted to step through it to the veranda outside. From the comparative obscurity of the hall this immense pane had the startling appearance of an animated picture, framed in dull, heavy gold, possessing as immediate foreground the never-ceasing procession on the Board Walk; beyond, the dappled, spark-

ling ocean, dotted with distant sails, and across the entire sheet, as if marked by a ruler, the clear-cut line of the horizon, blue sky meeting bluer water, the one flecked with fleecy clouds, the other with snowy canvas.

Though cool and quiet this parlour was in little demand, the visitors, with singular unanimity, preferring the broad, breezy veranda, where chatter and laughter were incessant, the gay fluttering summer dresses of the ladies bestowing variety and piquancy upon an attractive scene.

But in the more secluded drawing-room Lottie Maguire preferred to sit opposite this magic picture when the solitude of her own apartment became irksome to her and she felt a natural liking for contact with the cheery public life of the hotel, though lacking any actual desire for mingling with it. She had this parlour very much to herself; sometimes a girl, with the sprightliness of a gaily decked humming bird, flitted in, took a glance at the tall mirror, gave a dab here and there to her hat, her hair or her plumage and flitted out again; sometimes one or two of the old ladies of the place sat down before the great window and enjoyed subdued conversation.

One day a tall, slow-moving lady, who wore a perpetual smile, perhaps because her teeth were so perfect, drew her chair near to the one in which Mrs. Maguire was seated. Her nose was decorated with gold-rimmed glasses and she had a habit of looking over them, with an expression most benevolent. There was an air of culture about her, and her voice was low and melodious, an acoustic boon to tired nerves, where many of the tones heard were of the high-keyed, shrieky sort, with gusts of piercing laughter.

" You do not seem to be enjoying your stay at Atlantic City," said the tall lady, beaming upon Mrs. Maguire.

" I enjoy it as much as I should enjoy any other place," replied Lottie, quietly.

" You say that somewhat hopelessly."

" I am in mourning."

" So I see, but that should not interfere with one's peace of mind."

Lottie looked at the smile with an expression of surprise.

"I have lost my two children," she said simply, but with finality in her tone.

"Do not say 'lost,' I beg of you, dear Mrs Maguire. They told me that was your name, and I have been yearning to speak with you for some days. You don't mind my doing so, I am sure?"

"You are very kind, but I would rather not—I have had so much attempted consolation—as if anything could console. People are well meaning, but they—they do not understand."

"Indeed they do not. I quite agree with you, Mrs. Maguire. But the dawn has overspread the east, the day is breaking and the light will soon shine over all the earth. And it is the crowning glory of our sex that in this, the new land of promise, the Christ of our latter day should be a woman."

The apostle clasped her hands in rapt adoration, but Lottie glanced quickly at her, with something like alarm enlarging her clear eyes.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"I was sure of it, and I am so glad to be the first to bring you the glorious tidings—especially glorious to us, the suffering women, now to suffer no more. Doubtless they have been feeding you with husks crudely garnered from the Bible, as if that were food for the etherealised minds of to-day. We have gone far since that book, useful in its time, was written, but now valueless until interpreted by the most divine of created beings, Mary Mason Baker Glover Patterson Eddy, of Boston. To her came the inspiration, and she stands to-day the goddess of elucidation, the crown of true knowledge on her glorified brow."

"Are you speaking of some new kind of religion?"

"New, yet forever and everlastingly old—older than time, newer than to-morrow, now permitted of promulgation, for their eyes can see the light, yes, and bear it, the light shining through the life and works of Mother Eddy, the seeress of our closing century, the chosen of

God to reveal His purpose to this favoured generation."

" Perhaps, madam, if you had been bereaved as I have been bereaved, high-sounding vague phrases would have brought little balm to your crushed heart."

The beaming lady did not resent this imputation; her smile broadened and she seemed to glow across her glasses at the speaker.

" What you term bereavement has been my lot as well as yours. Three of my little children were chemicalised within one week by what the world calls diphtheritis."

" Chemicalised? "

" The word would be ' died ' in your vocabulary."

" Three! How dreadful! Forgive me that I spoke as I did. Was the physician unable to do anything for them? "

" Physician? I allowed no physician to approach them. I am an enlightened woman, and physicians will soon be relegated to the dark ages to which they belong. But the glory that came to me—perhaps, however, you remember some account of the Commonwealth versus LeGrue trial? "

" No, I never heard of it."

" It was in all the papers. I am Mrs. LeGrue."

" My husband does not care for me to read the papers, and I confess I have but little interest in them."

" Never mind. I have it all in a pamphlet which I will give you, reported by our own stenographer, with a few words of introduction by Mrs. Eddy herself. Oh, I am favoured among women, I was considered fit to suffer martyrdom for the faith. The state indicted me for manslaughter, but it found that iron bars did not a prison make, nor—nor—what you may call it, a cage."

" I hope you were not imprisoned," said Lottie with growing interest.

" No, I was acquitted triumphantly, in spite of man-made laws, a corrupt and prejudiced press, and an ignorant biassed judge. This unjust magistrate forbade my going on with the address I had prepared for the jury, but it is all printed in the pamphlet I mentioned,

and you shall read it there. He said it had nothing to do with the point at issue, but I knew what the true issue was, a view refused to his benighted mind. He thought they were trying *me*. Far otherwise. They themselves were on trial, and this was but an opportunity for me to make my testimony heard among men."

"But surely you sorrowed for your children?"

"Why should I? They were changed to the world, but not to me. Sorrow is but a futile mental expression, as pain is but a myth—an evil thought. But believe that you are glad, and you *are* glad. Matter does not exist; we only think it exists. All is mind, and mind is God and God is mind."

"I do not understand you," said Lottie, shaking her head helplessly.

"I will lend you my most precious treasure, Mrs. Eddy's divine book, 'Science and Health,' until you can get one of your own, which I am sure you will prize, by-and-by, as I do mine. Read it thoughtfully, not trying to comprehend it by fallacious human understanding —oh, it is far, far above all that—but by the inner light of the soul, a God-given faculty which I think we modern women possess in such a transcendent degree. Then I will give you some pamphlets and some magazines, wherein you will read testimony borne by those who formerly grovelled in darkness, looking toward the vain solace of creed and superstition, but now rejoicing in the refulgence of the mountain top."

Lottie promised with little enthusiasm to read whatever was bestowed upon her, and for some days she struggled with the new cult, finding, as Mrs. LeGrue predicted, that human understanding concentrated upon the subject was indeed misplaced. But in some way the reading fascinated her, and she persevered at it, finally obtaining from Boston an express package of books which the smiling lady recommended to her. In like manner her acquaintance with the eloquent Mrs. LeGrue flourished, and the big woman seemed to exercise a hypnotic influence over her. The dislike Lottie had at first entertained for the woman vanished, and they

were always to be found together during Maguire's frequent absences. They sat side by side in the drawing-room, or promenaded along the Board Walk absorbed in conversation. Lottie's sadness fell away from her, and she became once more the cheerful, contented person she had previously been. This change delighted her husband, and when she attributed it all to Christian Science, he blessed Christian Science. Willingly he undertook to read Mrs. Eddy's " Science and Health," an expensive volume covered with limp leather, a palpable imitation of that triumph of book-making, the Oxford Bible, as its contents were an imitation of a religion. The print was large, and Maguire struggled through it on the train coming from and going to New York. He also perused the pamphlets and the magazines. He could devour a great deal of reading matter when he tried, and his mind was quick to grasp the gist of an argument, but the logic of Christian Science baffled him and scored his brow with perplexity.

" Did they teach Christian Science in your college, John? " he asked the Mayor one day, finding him alone in his office.

" Never heard of it. What is it? "

" That's what I thought you'd tell me, perhaps."

" I know something of Christianity—in theory—and had a smattering of science in practice, but the combination is new to me."

" Well, I've been studying it of late. It's a great thing—religion with an elevator and all modern improvements. According to it, everything's just like the mugwumps; you hear a lot about them, but you can't find them when you come to count the votes. I'm not much on new religions myself; seems to me I'd rather trust the old roads when I try to get to heaven; they've been longer at it and they ought to know the way. Still, I dunno. Why couldn't we have the latest inventions in religion as in anything else? Our grandfathers were contented with the stage-coach, and our fathers rid on a slow freight, but we like the limited, and a dollar for a chair in the parlour car."

"What are the principles of this new fad?"

"Well, now, you get me there, John. When I started reading that book—it's writ by a woman with a powerful flow of language—I said to myself either this lady ought to be in some nice comfortable lunatic asylum, or I should be wearing a strait jacket, I dunno just which, but I saw we had no business communing together. Our minds weren't built on the same interchangeable system at all, at all. I can understand the New York *Try-bune*—at least I know what the boys think they're trying to say, but this book ov Mary Jane's is beyond me. However that may be, Christian Science is getting to be a great organisation, John! I'm on to that part of it. When they're looking after their souls, they're not neglecting good hard cash for their bodies, and that makes me think there's some inspiration in the thing after all. They've got branches everywhere and millions of members, and they see that the contribution box doesn't fall to pieces for lack of use. They can cure any mortal thing that's the matter with you by just sending a thought message over an invisible wire that doesn't charge any toll, and that without any medicine or any expensive going to college. That's a great thing, John. It's tough on the drug stores, but lucrative for the Christian Science nobs, for they charge as much as a regular doctor, and insist on their money in greenbacks, and not in thought currency like the treatment, which shows their own good sense, whatever it says for their patients' understanding. Begobs, John, if we could work that racket on elections there would be no need of a campaign fund, or a deal with the virtuous republican party. We'd just sit here and thought-wave the hoodlums along Fifth Avenue to vote for us."

"Then I gather you don't believe in Christian Science, Pat?"

"I don't get enough out of the book to believe or disbelieve. I dunno what she's driving at half the time. It reads like an editorial in the *Evening Post* mixed up with one from the *Morning Journal,* all conglomerated with a milkshake machine. But the dollars and cents

part of the show which I get out of the magazine and the pamphlet is plain sailing. There's no be-gob nonsense about that. And it's quite in line with the genius of the time. When Jesus Christ was crucified there was only His clothing to cast lots for. When the promoter of Christian Science croaks they'll be millions to divide."

BOOK VI

ON THE SUMMIT

CHAPTER I

"I AM COME TO FETCH YOU HOME"

THERE is a stability of debt as well as a stability of resource. A man may become so heavily involved that his creditors dare not let him sink. They stand to lose everything if he goes down, whereas if they sustain him he may pull through. It had reached this pass with McAllister when the cheque of Grace Van Ness came into his possession. He had little to fear from those to whom he owed the most money; it was the smaller creditors who were pressing him, and any one of them at any moment might wreck him if no funds were available for immediate liquidation of claims. It is possible that one or other of the more important firms with which he dealt might even have supplied him with money besides trusting him further with goods, but to make such application would have been tantamount to a confession of failure; it was a desperate remedy, to be tried only when the patient was *in extremis*.

Monro's unexpected opposition to the cashing of the cheque seemed like the refusal of a life-buoy by a drowning man. The further threat of withdrawal if the only money available was made use of brought McAllister to the verge of a nervous collapse. For the first time in his energetic life he became thoroughly disheartened, and sat with arms on the table and his head bowed upon them, not knowing what to do, scarcely capable of connected thought. He felt that he could not go on if Monro deserted him, yet disaster confronted him if

some thousands of dollars were not instantly forthcoming. He had reached no conclusion, when at last the door opened. Monro entered, hung up his hat in its usual place and sat down at his desk without a word. A glance at his jaded face showed McAllister that his partner also had been passing through a crisis.

"Jim—Jim, old man, you—you couldn't have meant what you said," ventured the senior member in a faltering voice.

"I did at the time, Ben; I don't now, I made a mistake. If you're willing to let it go at that, I am."

"But, Jim—how about the cheque?"

"The cheque? Well, I guess the best thing is to cash it. That's what it was written for, I suppose."

Ben jumped up, grasped the hand of his friend, tried to speak, but could not, then flung his hat on his head and fled.

Monro had once complained of the numerous stormy capes the firm had been compelled to weather, but it seemed after this final promontory was shaved they were at last on the open sea, with the wind as they wanted it. When prosperity came, it came with a rush, and debts dissolved before it like hillocks of sand in a rising tide. Creditors who had been insistent became now most gracious when their forbearance was no longer needed, and those who, through fear, had been lenient said they always knew McAllister was a remarkable business man; they had selected him for a winner from the very starting post. You will find a hundred men in New York to-day who gave McAllister his chance in life, who are the founders of his fortune, who recognised his ability long before any one else noticed it, who said, "Mark my words, that young man will succeed," when the rest of New York was doubtfully shaking its head.

Prosperity made no difference in the bearing of McAllister. He had been so optimistic in failure that he could hardly be more so in success, and there was no reason that he should become less confident. He had been so sure of the future that the actual possession of an ever-increasing income merely gave tangibility to a

realm of wealth he had always occupied in imagination. When necessity compelled him to move into cheaper and cheaper premises, so far as his home was concerned, if a place frequented so seldom could be designated home, his happy disposition showed the reason of removal to be invariably the greater healthfulness of the situation. Wherever McAllister happened to be living at the moment was the exact place he would have chosen had he been ten times a millionaire. The fact that it happened to be an economical residence was a mere accident. He moved up the ladder of opulence as cheerfully as he had gone down. A man must learn by experience, he said; he had tried the remote districts and found them wanting. He came to rest in a superb suite of rooms in an expensive hotel on Fifth Avenue, and that seemed for a time the acme of bliss.

The resolution to build a house formulated itself in his mind one day, and the architect was at work the next. McAllister intended this residence to be success made visible in stone; a magnificent birthday present to his wife; a kind of testimonial showing his appreciation of her common sense in marrying so potent a man. He inquired for an hour or so into the merits of various architects, selected his man, flung before him a few ideas that he wished carried out, and left the rest to the artist he had chosen. Consequently he achieved a notable dwelling. He furnished the mansion on somewhat the same principle, going always to the expert, and generally accepting his advice. He did not think much of the paintings purchased on his behalf, but he had a New York man's respect for their price. He would have preferred something more in the style of the popular chromo; a picture should tell a story, he thought, and the more moral the story the better the picture. However, painting was not in his line; technique was doubtless a good thing to have about the place, and if so, it was well to get the best in the market, no matter what the cost. Theoretically the house and its belongings should have been an object lesson in bad taste, but it was actually a triumph, for he had gone in each instance to

the man who knew, usually accepting educated opinion, even when it conflicted with his own ideas.

Constance had long ago given up all hope that her husband would ever remember any of their anniversaries. Their wedding day came and went unnoticed. If he thought of it a week later, or of her birthday a month after it was past, he bought a belated present, always a little more expensive than he could rightly afford at the moment. His deep regard for her was thus easy to demonstrate with a pencil and a bit of paper; deeds speak louder than words—sometimes. He would do anything in the world for his wife, except take a day off from his business; but then the business was all for her, and so it came to the same thing, as she would have seen if she had been deft at mathematics.

It therefore filled her with surprise when on her birthday he came to the hotel quite unexpectedly, and announced that in honour of the event they would take a drive together; he had a carriage and pair waiting at the front. Constance went with him, and they drove up the avenue, around the park for a while, and out again, and so to the new residence.

"Let's go in here, Constance," he said in an offhand way.

"Oh, no, please. I don't want to visit any one to-day."

"Come along, Connie. You'll like the folks in this house. They're good people."

"Indeed, Ben, I'd rather not. I'm not dressed for calling. I thought you were just going for a drive."

Ben laughed good-naturedly. He was accustomed to implicit obedience from every one; it was a matter of course; and he exacted it much more ruthlessly than he had any idea of, brushing aside the prejudices or objections of others as if he, of necessity, must know best, but he did it all with an intention so evidently kindhearted that he seldom met contradiction. Before Constance could make further protest he was out of the carriage holding forth his hand to assist her. She, partly from the habit of assenting to anything he proposed, partly fearing that the good people inside to whom he had

referred might be witnessing her hesitation, descended, and together they went up the steps. The door was flung open before he could ring, and they walked into the mansion side by side. The entrance hall was in itself an apartment of magnitude, the comparatively low timbered ceiling seeming to increase its actual area.

A chimney stood like a huge pillar of brick in the centre, with a fireplace on either side; one opposite the front door, the other facing the rear of the room.

Ben led his wife to the drawing-room at the right, and she wondered why the uniformed servant who opened the door did not direct them.

"There, Connie, what do you think of this place? The paintings alone cost—"

"Hush, Ben," she whispered, "don't speak so loud."

"Why?"

"Because the hostess may hear you."

"Hostess? The hostess does hear me."

"Well, then, all the more reason—"

"The hostess is in this room, Connie."

Mrs. McAllister looked at him, an added pallor coming to her pale face.

"What do you mean, Ben?"

"This house is yours."

"Have you rented it?"

"Not likely."

"You haven't bought it, surely?"

"Bought it? Not by a long shot. I built it."

For a moment she swayed slightly and put her hand against the artistic mantelpiece to steady herself. Her eyes closed and she seemed scarcely to breathe, looking almost as if she had been one of the marble figures that had been purchased for him in Italy. McAllister chuckled as he saw these signs of suppressed emotion, a broad grin brightening his face; the surprise had been complete, almost overpowering.

"Come along, Connie, and I'll show you the house. I tell you what it is, girl, the architects of our day beat the world. There is an individuality about their work that is admirable and distinctive. I've been more than

pleased with what this man has done for me. The only thing we quarrelled about was an elevator. I wanted an elevator facing the door where that chimney is. He wouldn't have it; said he'd chuck up the job if I insisted, so I gave way to him. But I got the better of him on telephones. I told him I had to have a telephone in every room, so that I shouldn't need to run down to the hall each time the Central rung me up. He didn't like that idea a little bit, but when he saw I was determined he sat up nights scheming concealments for them. Now, Connie, I'll bet you a new hat you can't find the telephone in this room."

The lady looked about her, and, discovering no signs of the instrument, shook her head.

"You've lost the hat. Why, it's in that writing desk. You lift the lid, which automatically rings up the Central, and there you are. You close the lid, which rings off, and then you have a writing desk again. I tell you what it is, Connie, I'm going to have a telephone rigged up on the dining table, so I can talk to the office without leaving my chair; wire concealed in the leg of the table."

Constance followed him from suite to suite, from room to room. It was all admirable, luxurious and convenient to the last degree; marble, silver fittings, automatic devices, rare natural woods, everything complete to the most minute detail.

"Well, Connie, what do you think of it? Wonderful, isn't it?"

"It's more than wonderful."

"I knew you would say that. Yes, Con, there's nothing of the log cabin about this place. Well, I'll just cut down to the hotel and tell them to send up all our things. I must skip now." He glanced at his watch. "Gee whiz! I've lost two hours and a quarter! Don't matter; it's all in a lifetime. Ta, ta, Con. If you don't see what you want, ring for it. I may be home late; don't wait up."

The Alladin of the Wonderful Lamp was gone, but the Palace remained.

As McAllister had predicted, he was late in getting

home that night; the two hours and a quarter lost on his wife's birthday took a good deal of catching up, which shows the necessity of seizing the flying moment while it is on the wing. He was even later than he intended, because he forgot all about the new house and went direct to the hotel. The elevator man said in surprise:

"Why, Mr. McAllister, I thought you moved out today."

"Gee smoke! So I did. No, I won't go up with you. I'll go up the avenue instead."

He hailed a cab, and wondered for a moment if the new house would be as handy as the hotel, after all.

A very thin latch-key opened the very thick door, and McAllister stood in his own hall. He laughed quietly to himself as he remembered that in his hurry to be gone he had not indicated to his wife the suite of rooms they were to occupy, and he wondered now which she had chosen. He would soon discover. Each door, a triumph of mechanism, opened noiselessly to his touch, lighting an electric cluster as it swung, a silent torch-bearer to his progress. As he advanced from one untenanted chamber to another, the stillness of the house began to impress him with a feeling of strange loneliness. The indefinable spirit of human presence had not yet permeated this newly created body; the house was still an architectural Galatea, lacking life's light zephyr. The hand of caprice had moved no article of furniture since the man from the warehouse had placed it with calculated precision. The rooms retained the stiffness of the show window, wanting only the list price in plain figures on a broad white card.

At last on an empty bed his eye caught a contrast of colour; a black silk handkerchief was spread on the snowy counterpane, and a square white envelope lay on the silk, black on white, white on black, an admirable arrangement for attracting attention; and thus he regarded it, forgetting that in his poverty days he had given that handkerchief to the girl he was to marry, a costlier gift than the house, for its purchase nearly bankrupted his resources. Now house and handkerchief were his again.

McAllister snatched up the envelope addressed to him and tore it open. The enclosed letter was very long, he noticed that, and in spite of his increasing vague uneasiness there flashed across his brain that feeling of annoyance which always came to him when he was compelled to read a communication that was not typewritten. He sat down on the edge of the vacant bed, the soft rays of the electric light subdued through opaline glass illumining the numerous closely written pages.

DEAR BEN—What a testimony it is to the completeness of this house that I find here in my need the very ink, pen and paper with which to write to you, and that without even the necessity of ringing, as you suggested. Each sheet has the street and number engraved on it in just the style I should have chosen if I had had the selecting of it.

You may well be proud of your achievement, for into this mansion must have gone much of that marvellous power which you possess—the power of carrying on to success any project you make up your mind to accomplish. But I could not help thinking as I followed you through these rooms to-day that if this house is a monument to your business ability it is also typical of our married life, for there is not within its extensive compass one article of furniture, one book, one picture, no, not even a shelf in a china closet, of which I could say, "I have had that put in, not because it is artistic, or of the newest design, or expensive, but simply because I wanted it so." (*"Good gracious, is the woman jealous of her own house?"*)

You will have guessed before you read this far that I am writing you a farewell letter—that I am leaving you—deserting—that is the word, and what a treacherous, repulsive sound it has!

(*"Merciful God! She can't mean that! What have I done? What have I left un—"*)

But I think we have both reason to be thankful that matters are no worse between us, for I assure you, Ben, little as you ever suspected it, there were times in the

early days when my despair led me to the brink of leaving not only you, but all the world beside.

(*"Well; of all amazing—What* HAVE *I done?"*)

Ben, why, why, why, did you ever marry me? I'm not the kind of woman you needed. How often and often I have asked myself what fatality led you to choose me, and I have come to the conclusion that it was because you knew no other; that you made the mistake so many men make of marrying too young, before they know their own minds.

I have seen the lady who should have been your wife; have watched her drive in the park—have met her walking up the avenue.

(*"That's it! I might have known there was a woman at the bottom of this. Me, of all men! Oh, Connie, Connie—"*)

There are hundreds of them in this pride-ridden city; the wives of successful business men, advertising the riches of their husbands by the clothes they wear; by the equipages they drive in.

(*"Oh, it's not that then."*)

You should have a wife who would dress superbly; who would never wear the same gown twice; a woman of whom men would say, "How much money her husband must make to be able to deck her out in such jewels;" a modiste's model and as soulless; who valued a kind word not at all, and a cheque only for the figures written upon it; in short, a woman with no heart to ache at a husband's neglect.

(*"Neglect! As if I hadn't slaved and—"*)

"Ring for what you want," said you as you rushed away to overtake your lost two hours. There isn't a wire in this grand house that could carry my message; there isn't a servant but would think me demented if I said, "I want my husband, and I want him only." Although I felt myself hardening and hardening as the companionless years went by, there was always a lingering hope that you would say at last, "Now I have a day, a week, to spend with you." As your income increased and increased, so grew the desire to add still more to it.

Never will the huge establishment on Sixth Avenue be large enough to contain your ambitions. I saw that at last, and when hope died I made my preparations for leaving you. You will lose two hours no more on my account.

(*"How she harps on that. It was two hours and a quarter. Words everything; actions nothing, in a woman's estimation."*)

I had made complete preparation for my departure when you came in so unexpectedly and proposed a drive in the park. My heart almost stopped. Could it be possible that God had led me to this resolution, only to show me how mistaken I had been in my estimate of you? A drive through the park in the middle of a business day! Two hours expended on me! Incredible!

(*"Curse those two hours! I wish I hadn't mentioned them."*)

I was nearly speechless between hope and fear, but I soon saw that you did not notice my agitation. Your effigy sat beside me in the carriage, but your mind had never left Sixth Avenue. Lines of preoccupation were on your brow, dial-marks of minutes being lost. You saw nothing of the park, with its imitation lakes, its imitation hills and dales, its imitation vistas, bogus from gate to gate; no wonder New York is proud of it; scenery built to scale; its motto, "Keep off the grass." And as I sat as silent as yourself, I read your life by the lines on your brow as a gipsy reads the palm. I saw you old before your time; all faculty for any rational enjoyment of life burned away before you were middle-aged; rich without a healthful nerve left in your body; a man who had rushed to the bank-counter of his Maker demanding that his life be discounted and paid cash down instantly; willing, eager to sacrifice twenty, thirty, forty years of it, for ten condensed years, now, on the nail. Then the final settlement, catching you doubtless at the busiest time, stricken dead at your telephone.

(*"Whew! I had no idea Connie could write like that! How a woman exaggerates! Unfair too—"*)

The galvanised resuscitation of hope was past; its

ghost troubled me no more until we came to the new house and found ourselves within it. When you told me it was mine I nearly swooned. Here at least was the semblance of a home; a much more humble one would have contented me if my husband had said, "Constance, I have made enough. This is the culmination of my efforts. Here we will live together and grow old together. You shall deck it forth to please you, and I shall be at your side while you are doing it. We will let others look after the wants of the public; we shall attend to our own."

(*"Merciful Heaven, how little she knows of the needs of a great business! Others! ! !"*)

But no. It was "Con, I have lost two hours. Don't wait up for me." The building of the house marked no change in the living of our lives. I realised that nothing but the building of a tomb and the occupying of it could do that. No gravestone, even in this age, bears the epitaph "Sacred to the memory of Ten Millions," with the dollar mark in place of the cross, yet that is the sort of memorial so many seem to be working for. I have no such ambition, and so I quit the turmoil. I did not desert you while you were struggling, for I could not bear to add another straw to the burden you carried for so many years, and I knew that, little as I was able to do for you, my going away would have caused you trouble and worry. Now it is different. You have the income of a prince, and if you search for me, which I beg of you not to do, it will merely mean the drawing of a cheque and the obtaining of the best detective aid that money can procure. You have few friends who will be scandalised by my action, and I have none, but as you would be annoyed by columns of newspaper conjecture, I advise you to say nothing of my departure, and above all not to employ detectives. What is done concerns only you and me, and I assure you that publicity will injure your business.

(*"She thinks this is the one argument that will appeal to me, yet I would—"*)

The law will lightly relieve you of the bonds you so

foolishly assumed before you were aware of the prizes the world had in store for you. I know that a good woman would have sat down in one of those luxurious chairs and wept before taking such a step as I am about to take, but I assure you I leave this house as dry-eyed as I entered it. I seem to have passed the weeping stage. I think the Midas touch of New York is already metalising my heart, but I hope I flee from it in time.

CONSTANCE.

McAllister had dropped sheet after sheet on the floor as he read; now he picked them up one by one and laid them on the empty bed. He walked slowly up and down the room with bowed head, the weight of years on his bent shoulders; then as if newly feeling his burden he sat down on a soft armchair whose rich upholstery sank under him. Here he remained marking thoughts off on his fingers. Now and then his brow wrinkled upward and he whistled low and tunelessly, for he had no ear for music. The electric lights seemed to become dim, and grey day began to compete through the pane. He noticed nothing until he was startled by a subdued rap on the door.

"Come in," he shouted, not knowing where he was.

A servant stood in the doorway.

"What time would you like breakfast, sir?"

"Breakfast? Oh, yes, breakfast. Why, I don't know. What time do we usually have it?"

"I don't know, sir. Mrs. McAllister said you would want to be at the office by eight."

"Oh, yes, of course. Quite right, quite right. Well, any time you're ready I am."

"Thank you, sir."

"Here, I say! Hold on a moment For one, you know. Mrs. McAllister—well, she's staying with friends —not ready for her just yet—house too new."

"Yes, sir."

"And, say! Tell the cook to make me some strong coffee. Strong and black, you know."

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER II

"DESPATCH ALL BUSINESS AND BEGONE"

FAITH is a good stimulant, but a man may have too much of it, and then it becomes a heavy blinding draught, obscuring the vision and dimming the breakers ahead. There was one factor in business life of which McAllister took no account, and that was the ever-recurring commercial panic. He thought that if he built his house upon a rock that house would endure, once he got the roof on. His trading had become so remunerative that there seemed no reason why it should not continue so, as long as he had the health and strength to direct it. The very size of his enterprise was in its favour, for its momentum and weight crushed obstacles that would have baffled or stopped a smaller concern; but he forgot that the bigger the barn the more surface it exposes to the wind when a cyclone comes.

It would be interesting to know how many men have been ruined by building a house several sizes too large for them; how many men have been dashed on the rocks by the breaking wave of prosperity on which they had so buoyantly floated. McAllister's mansion had been completed in the last year of a feverishly speculative period. Everybody was building something; railways, sky-reaching business blocks, towns and what not. Material of all kinds was at its dearest point; labour was expensive and scarce, the very rock which had been blasted for its cellars had cost more than if it had been gold-bearing quartz. Yet when the building was nearly finished he could have sold house and lot for fifty per cent. more than he had expended on them.

A year later he could hardly have given the place away, and as for selling it, people would have thought

him mad for entertaining such an idea. The project had involved much greater outlay than even he had anticipated at the outset. He had drawn heavily on the resources of his firm; there was no one to object except Monro, and he had some hesitation in making any effective protest. After all McAllister was the founder of that great money-making institution, and now owned enough of it to do practically what he pleased, although in a strictly legal sense the minority shareholders might have invoked protection; but the taking of such a step was never actually considered by Monro, who contented himself with dropping a hint now and then that his friend was somewhat lavish in his expectations from the business. But the answer to that was the undoubted growth of income, and the unlikelihood of this growth being arrested for some years.

A cyclone advances suddenly, after great heat and out of a clear sky. When the whirling cloud appears there is no time to do anything but fly to the cellar. If the cellar is not dug there is little use then in running for a spade.

The mansion was nearly finished when a great banking house with extensive ramifications in the West failed unexpectedly. The newspapers made some pretense that this failure had been anticipated; those behind the scenes were cognisant of the state of affairs; the banking firm had become involved through a reckless backing of railways which were being built where waggon roads would have sufficed for years to come. The failure would have no effect on the market. It had been discounted.

But as a great oak in the forest brings down lesser trees in its fall, the collapse of the bank had crushed houses in Chicago, San Francisco and elsewhere. A cold shiver ran up the financial backbone of the country. It seemed as if some imp of mischief had waved a wand over the land, and all ready cash had disappeared. Resources in plenty, securities in plenty, but no money.

McAllister met the situation with a smiling face. Everything would be all right. The man on the knoll,

up to the knees in water, who, unlike the Maclean, hadn't "a boat o' his ain," told Noah that it was only going to be a shower anyhow. So McAllister, cheerful in the downpour, insisted he wasn't getting wet.

"You see, Jimmy, people have got to buy certain things, whether times are hard or not, and we've got these certain things to sell. We do a cash business and consequently have no bad debts. It is credit causes these panics; credit and a sudden loss of confidence."

"All that is true enough, still people buy less, and buy more cheaply. Our receipts have fallen off a good many thousands this month as compared with the same month last year, and they are going steadily down."

"Well, that's easily met. Shorten sail in a gale. We'll have to discharge some of our employees, but not any of the married men, Jimmy, if you can help it. Cut down salaries. Take ten thousand off mine; slice the wages of everybody else, at a rate of half that percentage. We're all in the same boat, and the crew can't growl if their rations are diminished only half as much as the captain's."

Monro smiled.

"The men may not be as familiar with percentage as you are, Ben. If they knew you had twenty thousand dollars a year left, they might not see any consolation in the percentage shaved off their own limited pay. However, we'll have to do it. I don't believe this storm is going to blow over as quickly as you think."

On the evening of the day that McAllister moved into his new house, he and Monro sat late together questioning columns of figures; discussing what was to be done in the future. They walked up the deserted street together, after the frequenters of theatres had gone home, and Monro thought nothing of the matter when his friend bade him good-night at the steps of the hotel, for he, too, had forgotten the existence of that monumental folly further up-town.

Next morning McAllister did not appear, and toward noon Monro telephoned to the hotel, but they knew nothing of him, and to the house, but its numerous telephones

were silent; the Central could get no reply to its call. Monro, fearing something was wrong, went up to the mansion, but no one answered the door, and an obliging policeman informed him that the servants had all left in the early part of the day. Later a man with a valise had gone off in a cab, but that was all the policeman knew, and with this Monro had to be content. There was nothing further he could do.

The following day his anxiety was in part relieved by the receipt of a hurried note written by McAllister on a westward-bound train. He was going to take a rest, he said. Jim must do the best he could during his absence. He had thought over the subjects they discussed the night before, and the only practical suggestion he could make was to sell the new house. Schmittelmyer, of the firm of Schmittelmyer & Eikstein, had offered fifty per cent. more than it cost. Would Jim go to him at once and make a deal? The papers were all in the safe, and he had full power to transact business. Sell the furniture or store it. Make the best bargain he could; the Jew had plenty of money; but sell in any case, even if much below cost. Mrs. McAllister did not like the arrangement of the house, so he would have parted with it whether they needed the money or not. Jim was to apply the proceeds to the use of the company. He inclosed the thin latch-key and gave an address in Chicago where a telegram would find him within the next few days.

This sudden determination to take a holiday did not surprise Monro, although he thought the moment chosen rather inopportune. However, Ben was always doing the unexpected. Monro telegraphed to Chicago, asking his partner to keep in touch with the office wherever he was. Then he sought an interview with Schmittelmyer. That financier, however, had changed his mind, and no offer which could be made would tempt him to reconsider his determination. Thus the visit was worse than futile, for the rumour got abroad that the big firm of McAllister, Monro & Co. was in difficulties, an unfortunate whisper to become current at a time when the stability of even old-standing houses was in doubt. So Monro had

his work cut out for him, and he received no assistance from his chief, who merely wrote to mortgage house and lot, and chattel mortgage the furniture, if he needed to raise money. This was easier said than done at any rate of interest less than usurious and for any amount at all compared with cost price.

McAllister flitted here and there over the land, a veritable Wandering Jew, until Monro began to wonder what demon of unrest had taken possession of him. About a month after his departure he turned up, unawares, at the office, looking gaunt and unkempt. There was something of the old hilarity left in his manner, but it rang false to Monro; seemed assumed for the occasion.

"Well, Jim, old man, how's things?"

"Not as bright as I could wish. By the way, you are not looking any too well yourself. How are you?"

"Oh, I'm all right. I'll be the better for a shave. Haven't seen a barber for four days. Anything new? Sold the house yet?"

"No, to both questions."

"The old ship keeps afloat, eh? That's good, that's good. I just dropped in to see you, but I must be away to-night."

"What, off again?"

"Yes, 'off again, on again, gone again, Flannigan.' That's me, Jimmy."

"Why don't you go to some quiet spot and take a good rest? This incessant travelling is harder on a man than sticking to business."

"Well, you know, a fellow ought to see something of his own country. There's too much of this going to Europe. I believe a man should spend his money where he makes it. I couldn't rest in a quiet spot anywhere."

"Talking of making money, Ben; we're not making any too much. When are you coming back to take charge?"

"I don't know. Not yet awhile. Thunder! I haven't had a vacation in fifteen years, and you're getting on all right without me."

"No, I'm not. We need you here every day, and never so much as within the last month."

"You talk as if I were indispensable. I'm not."

"I regard you as indispensable."

"Nonsense. What would you do if I were struck dead at the telephone? You'd get along without me, I guess. You'd have to."

"Certainly, but there's more danger of your being smashed up in a railway accident the way you're going on."

"That's all right. I carry a lot of insurance. Anybody particular been to see me since I've been gone?"

"A reporter has been hanging about these last few days inquiring for you."

"A reporter! Good heavens! What did he want?" cried McAllister breathlessly, his eyes dilating.

"Wanted to interview you."

"Of course, of course. But what about?"

"He wants the views of noted business men on the depression—hopeful views; so I told him you were his man. He thinks the publication of a series will have an encouraging effect on the country."

"Oh, the depression, that's all right. It won't last long. You tell him so next time he comes. Anything else?"

"No, nothing important. Had a delegation in from our impeccable city government the other day. You don't need to ask what it wanted. It was after a donation and didn't get it. The cheek of that organisation is something amazing."

"Why didn't you tell them we were republicans?"

"I did, but they said republican money was just as good as any other these times. The delegation was composed of two distinguished citizens, who looked as if they had recently been graduated from behind some bar. Nothing would do but they must see you, although, hearing you were West, they condescended to explain the matter to me. I offered them a hundred dollars, but they wouldn't look at it. The leader glanced at his notebook and said a firm like this ought to be good for ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand! I'd see them in ——. What did you say?"

"Well, I told them that this wasn't just the time for throwing away lump sums like that, business was too slack; they blustered a bit and threatened a bit, then took themselves off."

"Threatened? What can they do?"

"I don't know. They were very vague. Hinted I was piling up trouble for myself. They were the kind of men who believe in bluffing. I was perfectly polite with them, and merely said I was sorry we were not in a position to do anything lavish just now. I suppose they can put us to some trouble with this ordinance or that, but I doubt if they can bother us ten thousand dollars' worth."

"I should think not. If there are any of the by-laws we're not keeping, all they have to do is to let us know and we'll reform. Well, Jimmy, I want to get a little cash, and then I'm off again like our friend Flannigan."

"Very good. I think we can manage it. How is Mrs. McAllister? I hope you haven't been dragging her all over the country with you?"

"Oh, no; she's all right. Staying with friends. So long, Jimmy, I must go to get shaved."

CHAPTER III

"DASHED OUT WITH A GRECIAN CLUB"

McALLISTER took the road again, and Monro returned to his desk. The day they spent together had deepened the latter's anxiety regarding his friend. Monro looked upon McAllister as a man upon the point of breaking down from overwork; his forced hilarity; the wildness of his eye, whose feverish gleam was too bright; the impossibility of getting him to concentrate his attention upon any one subject for more than a minute or two at a time; the futility of attempting to interest him in the details of his own business were all indications that something was wrong. Jim urged him to remain a few days in town to consult a physician, but McAllister laughed at the proposal. He was never more fit in his life, he insisted; this knocking round the country agreed with him; he was always fond of travel, but never had had an opportunity of indulging in it before; the business was in excellent hands, no fear on that score; the commercial depression was merely temporary, a ripple on the troubled waters of finance; so it was "Good-bye, Jimmy, old man; you're doing first-rate," and McAllister stepped into the westward bound sleeping car.

Monro turned away from the railway station with an unwonted sinking of the heart oppressed by a dull sense of impending disaster more ominous even than the business outlook.

Several days after McAllister's departure one of the two delegates who had formerly waited upon him came in to see him again. It was the man with the notebook, the more truculent of the pair.

"Has McAllister got back yet?" was his first question.

"He was in town about a week ago, but has gone West again."

"Did you mention this little matter to him?"

"Yes; he quite agrees with me that the state of business is such we have to look very closely to our expenditures."

"Oh, that's his idea, is it? Well, I suppose you both know your own business best. We rather expected him to drop in to see us and have a chat over the matter."

"He was in town for the day only, and was very busy."

"A day doesn't last long in New York, does it? That's all right; it's none of my funeral. I just thought I'd call in and see, so that there would be no misunderstanding. I'm not here as official collector, you know; just in my private capacity."

"That is very good of you, but we've quite made up our minds that we can't do anything at the present moment."

"I see. Some future time, eh? Well, that's all right. My name is Billy Cudmore; perhaps you know who I am?"

"No, Mr. Cudmore; I don't think I do."

"Well, I'm licence inspector, and, although I'm here in my private capacity, it'll save me another trip, and also your time, which is valuable, if you'll just let me look at your licence now, so I can make a note of it."

"Licence for what?"

"Why, for selling liquor, of course."

"Oh, we don't deal in liquor here."

"Why, how is that?"

"Well, we don't believe in it, for one thing. Both McAllister and myself are temperance men. We think there are too many liquor-selling establishments in the city as it is, without our going into the business."

"That's kind of strange; I don't quite understand it. A complaint has been lodged against you for selling liquor without a licence. The matter was referred to me, of course, and I said at once it was absurd; told 'em I knew you, and you weren't the sort of people to do such

a thing unless you had the right to do it. I said I'd drop in and see your licence. Of course, it never struck me you hadn't any."

"I should think you might have discovered that without coming here, by simply consulting your records."

"Of course, of course. That's one way. Still, mistakes happen now and then, and a moment's talk may straighten out things."

"Who made the complaint?"

"Ah, there you get rather out of my department. Anything in my line I'm willing to tell you, but that—"

"It doesn't matter."

"I may say it's a neighbour of yours, a saloonkeeper and one of the most respectable men in New York. He says his bottle trade is knocked out by you underselling him, and he thinks if you want to play that game you ought to take out a licence, which he didn't suppose you had, and I thought he was wrong. He says he doesn't see why he should be compelled to carry a licence if you don't."

"It does seem a little unfair, but he overlooks the easily proven fact that we never sold a bottle or a glass of the stuff here since the place was opened."

"He says he's got proof of the contrary all right enough."

"I don't doubt it. I suppose, then, I may regard this as the opening of the campaign for the ten thousand?"

"Now, look here, my friend," said the inspector, waving his open hand in the air like the blade of a sculling oar in the water, "don't you make any mistake about this. The two things have got nothing to do with each other. We're here to see that the law's complied with, that's all. You prove that you're all right, and you *are* all right."

"I think the law works the other way about; it's for you to prove that we are all wrong."

"Perhaps you know a lot about the law, and perhaps you don't. Take a pointer from me and get a good lawyer for this thing. Now, here's the card of a friend of mine in the law business. It'll pay you to consult him.

He understands the game and'll see you through."

"Thanks. I don't think I'll need him."

"Well, it's up to you. You do just as you think fit, but I'm talking as a friend, understand? As one gentleman to another. It won't do no hurt to have a talk with him."

The inspector rose to go, leaving the lawyer's card on the desk.

"Well, so long."

"Good-bye. I'm much obliged for your friendly interest."

"Oh, that's all right. I don't want to see no man get into trouble."

The days passed without further sign on the part of the aggressors; the tiger seemed hesitating before it sprang. Monro thought it all a huge game of bluff, and as time went by he forgot about it.

One lovely morning, which, nevertheless, gave promise of great heat later on, he was roused at his desk by the inspiring music of a military band passing along the street. Going to the window, he saw an apparently endless procession marching up the avenue, with draped flags flying, and not one band, but many.

"What's all this about?" he asked a clerk.

"Memorial Day, sir."

Thus was a date in early summer stamped upon his memory, for that procession, on its way to place wreaths over the graves of some who had fallen that liberty might flourish, tramped across his brain for many days to come, and the patriotic music of the bands never afterward sounded in his ears without causing him to shudder.

It was nearly closing time when a police sergeant, accompanied by two patrolmen, entered his office. He looked up in surprise.

"Are you Mr. Monro?" asked the sergeant.

"Yes."

"I've come about that liquor case. I believe the licence inspector spoke to you about it."

"Yes. Are you going to take proceedings?"

"I believe so, Mr. Monro."

"Very good. Whom am I to go to see?"

"Well, I think you'd better see the captain of the precinct first."

"All right. I'll call on him to-morrow."

"He's waiting for you now."

"Very well. I'll drop round in a few minutes."

"I don't think you understand. I've got a warrant for your arrest. You must come with me at once, and I hope you'll come quietly."

"Arrest? There's no necessity for that sort of action. I'm here at any time I'm wanted."

"We want you now. Of course you understand I'm simply obeying instructions. You can have a cab if you like to pay for it, and if you'll give me your word as a gentleman that you'll go along quietly I'll dismiss these men and we can go out together."

"Thank you; I'll make no resistance, but I must speak to one or two here before I leave."

"Excuse me, Mr. Monro. I'm taking risks in what I've offered already. I'll be obliged if you'll close your desk and come right along; if not, I'll have to take you."

"Oh, very good; I'm at your service."

"That's sensible. I've got a cab in the side street. I suppose you'll stand the racket?"

"Certainly."

They drove together to the police station. Monro paid for the cab, dismissed it and went inside to a large room where, at a big flat-topped desk, an official sat writing. Several policemen in uniform were lounging about, and a man in citizen's clothes stood resting one hand on the desk.

Monro, quite accurately taking the seated official for the person in authority, walked up to the desk, the sergeant behind him.

"I am Monro, of McAllister, Monro & Co.," he said.

"Oh, are you?" commented the official, without looking up. Monro waited in silence for a few minutes, but seeing the other showed no sign of paying any attention to him he remarked:

"Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me why I am brought here, and why it was necessary to get out a warrant for a man who stood ready to appear whenever called upon to do so?"

"Say, this is Decoration Day all right enough, but we don't want any decorated speeches here. There's a hall across the road for that sort of thing."

The man in citizen's clothes laughed at this, as did also the lounging policemen.

"Very well. I'll go over to the hall, and come back when you are less busy," replied Monro.

"Not on your life you won't," said the official, jauntily, shoving back the papers before him. "No, sonny, we're ready for you. Have you got a lawyer?"

"No. I don't know of any charges to meet, or any need for a lawyer."

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well, I guess you know the charge all right enough, and this man here beside me is the best lawyer in New York for liquor cases."

"I'll choose my own lawyer, if one should become necessary."

"Will, eh?" said the official, rising and coming from behind the desk. "Now, look here, young man, I'm going to give you some advice that you don't need to pay for. You mustn't come in here with any of your up-town airs. See? The Fifth Avenue swagger don't go here. See? All men are equal before the law, and you're no bigger a muck-a-muck than any other criminal yanked in off the street. See?"

The captain had advanced truculently step by step as he spoke, drawing back his right clenched fist several times in a threatening manner, Monro retreating as the other came on.

"I want you to understand that I'm no criminal, and furthermore you know I'm not. Now if you will quit your blustering and attend to the business you are paid for attending to, I'll be much obliged."

"I'll attend to it, you —— —— ——," cried the captain, landing a terrific blow with his fist, which Monro, dodging, caught in the ear. The sudden onslaught had

taken him unprepared. It seemed incredible that a treacherous assault like this should have been contemplated. The door was wide open to the street, citizens were passing and repassing within hail, any one of them might come in at any moment, and this was the centre of New York, not an outlying district of Armenia. As Monro staggered under the unexpected stroke, these thoughts seemed to dance past his eyes. Recovering himself he very skilfully warded off the succeeding blow. Then with a spring forward he struck the captain full in the face with his clenched fist, and thought victory was his as the official with a scream of pain fell backward over the flat-topped desk. But Monro had to do with a gang that had no squeamish notions regarding fair play. He was in a minority of six to one, and the six were armed with revolvers and clubs, while he had no means of defence save his bare hands. From behind he was promptly felled to his knees by a well-planted blow of a heavy baton, the sickening impact mashing the back of his head. As he knelt there half-stunned and dazed, his fingers helplessly scraping the dirty floor, the captain recovering himself, taking a sort of running leap, delivered a kick in his ribs that sent him prostrate; then the cowardly assailant tried to kick him in the face, but the victim, more by instinct than from any thought of self-protection, covered it with his arms, which received the vicious thrusts of the captain's stout boots.

"Hold on, hold on," groaned Monro, "I give up. I've had enough."

"You'll resist the law, will you? You'd strike an officer, would you? Bet your life, you'll get enough."

The captain, panting and red-faced, ceased his exertions and drew a hand across his brow, for it was a hot evening.

"Put him into No. 1 and attend to him."

"Here, get up! Get on your feet!" cried one of the policemen, kicking him in the ribs, while another poked him with the end of his baton.

Monro raised himself slowly and warily, still guarding his face. The sergeant who had arrested him took him by the arm and assisted him to his unsteady feet.

"Attend to him," shouted the captain. "Fan him; it's a hot night."

The man in citizen's clothes laughed heartily. Some one shoved Monro towards an open door, and he staggered blindly to the top of a short flight of steps which he did not see. However, that made little difference, for a kick projected him clattering down the stair and against a wall opposite. He heard dimly the clank of bolts, and was again thrust forward. The warm blood was trickling down the back of his neck, and this annoyed him. There was another stunning blow from the policeman's club, again on the back of his head.

"In God's name—" he sobbed, but the strokes rained on him and he sank insensible to the floor of his cell. The fanning had put him to sleep.

It was dark when he partially recovered consciousness. He found his open hand pressed against the back of his head, and when he tried to remove it sharp pains shot through his trembling frame. When a man is disabled on the battle-field his first cry is for water. The inevitable fever arising from the wound demands water. Monro's mouth was parched and he moaned for water. He got his hand away at last, clammy and sticky, crawled somehow to the door of his cell, beat forcelessly against it, groaning, "Water, water."

"What are you making such a fuss about?" came a voice through the grating above him.

"Water, water."

"Have yez any money?"

"Yes, yes—all you want—but—quick—water."

"Get up on your feet and pass it through here."

With his unglued hand he painfully searched his pockets, but they were empty.

"Money to-morrow—water—water."

"Ah, that's no good. Go to the devil!"

Half in half out of delirium he spent the waterless night. Sounds came through the grating of his cell from the world outside and they bothered him. He heard the stamping of many feet in the hall opposite, and the ringing of cheers. The sound waves beat on his brain as if

the clubs were at their work again. In the intervals he caught fragments of speeches, "palladium of liberty," "blood shed that we may be free," and he thought they were referring to his battered head.

Then blessed oblivion came down on him again.

CHAPTER IV

"TO LEAVE YOU IN YOUR MADNESS"

SOMETHING in the image of a man had been kicked and clubbed into the cell the night before, but it was a wretched-looking creature that emerged, led tottering. Any judge would have been justified, on his mere appearance, in believing whatever a well-groomed policeman said of him. He was taken to the chief's private room, and there a basin was placed at his disposal to remove some of the results of conflict from his face, but instead of washing himself the pitiable object buried his face in the water and drank and drank until the frightened attendant shook him roughly by the shoulders, forcing him to desist.

"I'll—I'll give you the money—the money in the morning," he sputtered breathlessly, the water running down his face. He shrank timidly from the sight of the uniform, and when the policeman spoke to him jerked his arm up nervously to ward off a blow.

"Here, scrub yourself! You don't expect me to do it. Pull yourself together. No shamming now. Will ye have a lawyer?"

"Yes, yes."

"All right. Ye've some sense this morning."

The man in citizen's clothes came in and talked a good deal and whispered a good deal, Monro wrinkling his brow trying to catch the drift of his remarks, which seemed mingled disturbingly with the speeches of the night before. There would be five hundred dollars to pay and he would have to whack up with the police. The prisoner could not understand who was to whack up, but he agreed to everything eagerly.

He was brought before somebody and there were a

number of people about. His eyes followed the little lawyer, who was very active, whispering here and there. Some one was an illicit dealer in whisky. The detectives had run him to earth in a manner that reflected credit on something or other, and there were loads of proofs. He was again shaken by the shoulders, and again quailed. It seemed the magistrate wanted to know something and he was expected to answer.

"Yes, yes," he said.

"Has he been drinking?" asked the judge.

"Yis, yer 'anner," replied the policeman. "He was on a fearful bat last night. Took four men to get him into the cell. Assaulted them all, yer 'anner."

"Anybody hurt?"

"Nothing to speak of, yer 'anner, but he gave the captain a nasty rap."

"Oh, well, we must make some allowance for the heat and the day we celebrate. Stand for trial. Bail, seven thousand five hundred dollars. Three bondsmen."

There was a whispered conference between the court and the lawyer, joined in by the sergeant.

"All right," said the court at last. "Two bondsmen then. Bail, two thousand five hundred."

The lawyer brought the bondsmen forward. Proposals were made to which Monro agreed. It was wonderful how smoothly the wheels of justice revolved under the supervision of this man of law. And he was philanthropic as well.

"I'll look after him," he assured the sergeant. "I've got a cab at the door."

Monro, in a dream, surmised he was free. The lawyer got him into the cab and sat beside him.

"You live in Fifty-fourth Street?" he asked. "The directory says you do."

"I think so."

"Have you got a cheque-book there?"

"In the—in the third drawer—yes, that's where it is."

"All right then. We'll be there in a jiffy. You're feeling first-rate now?"

"First-rate."

"You'll be better after a bath and something to eat. I'll look after you."

"Thank you."

"Give me your keys. Which is the latchkey?"

Monro had signed some sort of receipt and had been given a bunch of keys, a pocket-book, a handful of silver and a knife. He bestowed the keys upon his companion, and helplessly counted the bills in his pocket-book, which, few as they were, puzzled him in an unaccountable way.

"They're all right; they're all right," said the lawyer hastily. "Put them up. You've enough there to pay the cab, and that's all you need."

Monro was very obedient and abandoned his enumeration.

Once inside the rooms the lawyer was anxious about the cheque-book, which his host with difficulty discovered. One cheque for five hundred dollars was written for the lawyer and another of like amount for the bondsmen. The lawyer scrutinised the drafts eagerly, and they were apparently perfect. In fact the habit of drawing a cheque was so strong with Monro that he might have written one in his sleep that the bank would cash. The lawyer placed the documents in his inside pocket with a sigh of relief.

"Have you a servant?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Is there a janitor or any one about?"

"I think there is."

"Will you be all right if I leave you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Do you want to see a doctor?"

"No."

The lawyer touched the back of the injured head, but the wounded man shrank from him with a gasp.

"Don't do that," he begged plaintively.

"I don't like to leave you this way. Will you have something to eat?"

"No."

"Will you have something to drink?"

"Yes, yes."

The lawyer brought him a glass of water, which he wolfed down, and asked for another.

"I think you'd better take off your clothes and have a bath. It 'ud tone you up. Shall I turn on the water?"

"Yes, please."

Monro undressed himself with difficulty. The shirt stuck to his back, and ripped off painfully like an adhesive plaster. He wallowed in the water, and then the Good Samaritan helped to rub him down, soothing him when he winced as the towel touched the contused back and arms, or the print of the captain's boot on his side. He found a soft dressing-gown in a cupboard and helped wrap the man up in it.

"I'd lie down now for a while if I were you and get a bit of sleep. I'll come up later in the day and see how you are. Shall I bring the police doctor with me?"

"O, God, no," muttered Monro, shuddering at the word "police." "Keep them away if you can."

"Oh, you're all right. You'll be fit as a fiddle when you wake up."

The obliging person in the citizen's clothes departed, after Monro had thrown himself down on the bed. The wounded man dozed off constantly, but was as constantly clubbed and kicked into wakefulness, starting up and protecting his face with his swollen arms, now working stiffly.

Once Grace Van Ness stood by his bed, and that seemed natural and right, for she had been flitting through his disordered brain. But she was angry with him.

"You will lose your money," she said. "You must stop the payment of that cheque. The police department is bankrupt. The blood that has been shed is wasted and the palladium of liberty is endangered by you. Why did you do it?"

"How could I help it, Grace?" he beseeched. "They were six to one, and they took me unaware. I fought till I was stunned."

He reached out his arms, but she faded away, mocking him.

"I'll have to explain that to her," he murmured. "She doesn't understand."

In the afternoon there was a rap at the door, and he thought it was the lawyer returned, but as he held the door slightly ajar he saw it was another.

"Mr. Holderness sent me, sir, to see if you were here."

"Holderness? Who's he? The lawyer?"

"No, sir. I'm from the store. *Our* Mr. Holderness, sir."

"Oh, yes. Tell him it's all right. I'll be down by-and-by. I was out late last night, tell him."

He shut the door and dressed himself with scrupulous mechanical care. He had all the New York man's neatness of attire. As he passed down the street no one would have suspected that here walked a man whose reason was dethroned, although there was an occasional unsteadiness of gait, a momentary hesitation at the street corners.

"I didn't get home till this morning," he said to Holderness when he reached the store. The latter was quietly solicitous, noting how white his chief looked, but supposed nothing serious had occurred, and Monro went directly to his room. He sat at his desk fingering his unopened mail; the ordinary letters had been attended to long since. He shuffled the envelopes about like a gambler stocking a pack of cards. Then a glimmer of sense returning, he called the chief clerk, gave him the bundle, and said:

"Will you look into these, and act without bothering me? I'm not feeling well to-day."

It was near closing time when his typewriter girl came in and asked him if he had any further need of her. He looked up at the young woman with knitted brow.

"I don't think so," he said at last. "Stay a moment. What's the meaning of palladium?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Neither do I. Haven't you got a dictionary?"

"Yes, sir—a small one."

"What's the use of that? You need a big dictionary

for the big words and a small dictionary for the small words. Get a big dictionary and look it up, please."

The girl retired, frightened at his ghostly face and his earnest incoherency. When she returned she said:

"It's a greyish metal found with platinum."

"What is?"

"Palladium."

"Nonsense. It's no such thing."

"It is also a defence or protection."

"Ah, that's better. That's right, I guess. Thank you. Good-night."

He sat there late, with his elbows on the desk, his throbbing head in his hands. When he let himself out the street lamps were lighted, although the days were at their longest. The former hesitation at the street corners came back to him with increased perplexity. He had lost his rooms—that confounded lawyer had taken them away. He should have stayed and acted as their palladium. Still, what could he have done—six to one? Where, then, could he go? To the police station? Never, never! Anywhere but there. Perhaps it had not been the lawyer after all. He was a good fellow, and had gone away friendly. Grace might have done it. She had come there before, and was offended about something. That was it. She could not take the rooms while he occupied them. Besides, he owed her an explanation. How simple and clear a situation becomes when you reason it out. He would go to her. Many a time he had walked Fifth Avenue on the chance of seeing her. That was the solution. He now strode forward with some directness up the avenue, shrinking beside the wall and treading cautiously when he saw a uniform idly twirling its club at the edge of the curb.

CHAPTER V

"MADAM, THIS IS MERE DISTRACTION"

WEATHER is king in New York; an absolute monarch. When he commands, his subjects obey without question, "Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do—or die." He sends his white-wreathed janissaries charging through the streets and says, "This busy town shall be closed for a few days," and the town is closed accordingly, none disputing the mandate, for if any attempt to infringe the order, he perishes, be he statesman or tramp. Death is the penalty of disobedience to a despot the world over. And the warmth of his anger is no less fatal than the cold of his displeasure. The victim is struck to the pavement and carried into a drug store. A heat-wave dissolves the social conventions; even the stiff collar wilts in its presence. A millionaire flies to the seashore or the mountains as quickly as may be, but if the hot blast take him unaware, coming earlier than was expected, he will sit in his shirt-sleeves during the evening on his doorstep, though this doorstep be the threshold of a palace.

When Monro reached the Van Ness mansion he found the steps tenantless. The front door, however, was wide open, but the entrance was protected by a hinged screen fastened on the inside, that allowed whatever air there was to percolate through the hall, and kept all summer insects outside. The screen did not baffle the young man for an instant; love laughs at locksmiths. He took out his pocket-knife, slit the wire gauze, inserted his hand and deftly undid the fastening. It never occurred to him to ring. A bell merely brought a servant, and he had nothing to do with such; it was the mistress of the house he wished to see, but he knew that he should not

enter a lady's boudoir unannounced, so he tiptoed gingerly down the hall and tapped lightly at her door, pleased with himself that he was acting according to the requirements of good society.

" Come in," said a dreamy voice.

Only one shaded electric light was burning, and it filled the room with subdued radiance. The fountain plashed outside like the sweet, gentle falling of rain, trebly melodious on such a night. The girl lay back in a reclining chair, the masses of her cloud of hair loose about her throat and shoulders and waist, her hands clasped at the back of her head, allowing the shower of bronze tresses to pour over them in a cascade of changing colour, away from the snowy pillar of her neck. The fleecy sleeves fell from the rounded arms, nudely goddess-modelled. Surprise struck her into scarcely breathing marble, as she gazed motionless at the smiling man, who stood there with his back to the closed door. Without changing her negligent posture she whispered at last:

" O Mr. Monro! I thought it was one of the servants. How did you get in? "

" The door was open, and I looked on that as an invitation; the latchstring hanging out, as we used to say in the West. Besides, I wanted to see you, so I came in."

" Won't you sit down? "

Now her arms dropped to her sides, and, with a little shiver of the shoulders, she sent the filmy lace rippling to her wrists, covering but not concealing the contour that the semi-transparent fabric enveloped.

He selected a wooden chair with a high-spindled frame and seated himself, sighing in careless contentment, but as he leaned back his head came in contact with the cross-piece, and the sigh was transformed into a gasp. A thread of pain ran through him, and the girl, watching intently, saw a spasm of trouble chase the gladness momentarily from his face. He felt again the warm oozing at the nape of his neck, and, as before, it annoyed him.

" I don't like this chair," he complained plaintively.

" Then take any other," said the girl, rising amazed to

her feet. "That one is artistic, colonial and uncomfortable." She moved an easy fauteuil from its place and his eyes followed her, happiness once more illuming them. "Won't you sit here?"

"Thank you. I'm afraid you think me rather a trouble?"

"Oh, no. Do you find that more to your liking?"

"Everything is to my liking. It did not use to be so, but it is now. Are you busy?"

"Busy, a night like this?" she asked with a nervous little laugh in unison with the tinkling fountain. She was in her reclining chair opposite him once more. "I was just idling and dreaming when you came in, and I am not sure yet but you are part of a dream. It is too warm even to read. It has been an awful day, has it not?"

"Yes, but not so bad as last night."

"Really? The evening papers say it was hotter to-day than yesterday, and will be hotter still to-morrow."

"Oh, the evening papers don't know what they are talking about. I was *there.* And that reminds me. You were angry with me about those cheques."

"No, not angry, Mr. Monro; I have often been sorry I spoke so harshly. Haven't you forgiven me yet? It is long ago, you know; time should have lessened your resentment."

"Not so very long ago."

"Well, it has seemed long to me, perhaps because I knew I had been unjust and a little hard. If you are revengeful—sometimes punishment comes, you know, without the intervention of the wronged person."

"I'm not revengeful. I wouldn't want to hurt an enemy, much less a friend."

"Then you are better than I. I don't think I could forgive an injury. That's the red hair, perhaps," and she laughed as she shook the strands from her face.

"Your hair is not red. It's—it's—I can think of no comparison to it. What's-his-name says it's red—Oh, you know," he snapped finger and thumb helplessly trying to recollect. "Well, never mind; it doesn't matter. I can't remember his name just now."

"I hope you haven't been discussing the question with any one," she said with some severity.

"Oh, no. That was a long time ago. Nothing matters now that I'm here and you're here. You're sure that you understand all about those cheques? Five hundred dollars each, but I couldn't help it."

"Five thousand, you mean."

"Was it five thousand?" He drew down his brow and pondered; then laughed softly to himself. "That's a joke on him. I've done him out of a lot of money then."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked the girl in low tones, her vague fear increasing. "Of Mr. McAllister?"

"Ah, that's the name I was trying to think of a moment since. Ben! Say, I'm worried about him. He's all over the country and won't come home. The business is going to pieces, but he won't come back. I don't believe it will last a month."

"Is that true? Is that what is troubling you?"

"Yes. If he doesn't come back I don't know what will happen."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't remember. Yes I do. Where did I put the telegram? Oh, here it is. He telegraphs every day, but what is the use of that? We need him."

Monro fumbled about in his pockets and at last produced a crumpled paper which he handed to her. The telegram said:

"Shall be at Grand Hotel, Cincinnati, next four days. McAllister."

"What you tell me is very strange," she replied after reading the message. "Hasn't he occupied his splendid house at all?"

"Only for one night. I think that's where the mistake was. The house was too costly for one night's use."

"Have you been out in the sun to-day?"

"Me? No. *You* know where I was."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, you called on me, didn't you? This is the return visit. Isn't that all right?"

The disturbing thought crossed her mind that he had been drinking, and this, with the heat of the day, had overcome him. The problem became how to get out of the room. He sat between her and the door, watching with an intentness at first embarrassing, latterly painful, every movement she made. Yet he seemed so gentle, and the tones of his voice were so kind, that even now she was not afraid of him. She hesitated about ringing for a servant, hoping he would go home of his own volition as quietly and as unnoticed as he had come. His eyes, never leaving her, divined her uneasiness. Now was his opportunity; now, or the vision might be gone as it had dissolved before his outstretched grasp when she censured him. She was meditating escape from him; he saw that. If he failed to speak, the empty chair would confront him; already she was wavering in his fevered sight, and the moments were slipping, slipping from him like sand in the glass. He leaned forward and spoke in a low voice:

"Grace, how lovely you look in that dress of woven vapour!"

The strange accents thrilled the girl as if she had been waiting for them all her life; a lost chord of the heart, newly awakened into music at the touch of his lips. She answered, half frightened, half in ecstasy, hardly knowing what she said, the lace fluttering at her throat, rising and falling with her quick breathing:

"Oh, more substantial than that, I hope, Mr. Monro."

"I called you Grace."

"Well, I like my own name."

"So do I. Mine is commonplace, but if you spoke it—"

"Is it Jim or James? There is something very friendly about the first—as McAllister pronounces it."

But he was not interested in himself or his title; absorbed in her alone, his shattered mind clung to one subject.

"Do you know how I picture you, Grace? In rages. You would be a very queen of tatters—"

"Oh, that is most uncomplimentary."

"No, no. Listen. We must avoid all misunderstanding now, Grace. I imagine you and me going hand in hand; no one else in the world; no money to make or to need; no cheques and no banks to cash them. Just the margin of the lake and the silver strand our pavement, you and me in rags and caring nothing but for each other. And the mountains to climb, to the edge of the woods, with the lake and all the land to look over. Will you come, Grace?"

"It's very likely. I always was an impracticable person, but I should like a needle and thread."

"And you'll wear your hair down as it is now. I think if God wanted to tell an angel how beautiful she was—He would compare her to you, Grace—"

"Oh, Oh, don't talk like that—you frighten me. What is wrong with you—Jim?"

"God could find no better simile. Your hair was all loose like that when I first saw you."

"No, no. You never saw me in such disarray before."

"Yes, my darling, yes. When I opened that stateroom door in the sleeping car, so softly you never heard, and you sat there, still half asleep in your snowy night dress, I thought it was the gate of heaven I had unclosed and—"

With a half-suppressed cry the girl had arisen, staring wild-eyed at him. He stood up also, leaving his chair as a drunken man might.

"What have I said? Shouldn't I have told you? I did not intend to until—until— Aren't you coming with me, after all?"

Breathless, she tried to evade him, but he was resolved she should not escape a second time. She was too precious for him to take any chance of losing her, and as he had read her thought before, her startled eyes now read his, and she knew she must humour his frenzy if she were to be victor.

"Jim," she whispered with forced calmness, "what is it you wish?"

"I want you to marry me."

"Yes. You will then do what I ask of you?"

"Always—always."

"Very well; sit down and let me leave you for a moment."

"Oh, not that, not that. You may never return, and I shall not know where to find you this time."

"I shall return at once; besides, you promised, and if you don't keep your promise I won't keep mine."

"Well then I'll—I'll tell you. If I put my hands in your hair I'll know it's really you. I don't feel sure of you even yet, but after that I should."

"Very well. I'm willing."

She came bravely up to him, and his hands lingered in her disordered locks, then he drew her toward him and kissed her unresisting lips.

"Grace! Grace, place your sweet cool hands on my temples and I know the pain will leave."

"Are you in pain?" she asked anxiously, but before he could reply she withdrew her hand with a shriek, and gazed horror-stricken at it.

"Jim, Jim!" she cried, "who has wounded you?"

"It's all right, Grace. That's from your own hair; mine—mine is black. The gold has come off on your fingers: it won't hurt; no, not gold; that stood between us, but I've throttled it. It must give way to me now."

But the frightened girl was not listening to him. She had pressed the electric button, leaving a stain on the delicate colouring of the wall.

"Sit down," she commanded, and he obeyed like a docile child.

The servant came to the door.

"Run, run for Doctor Marshall," she cried, below her panting breath. "Round the corner. Tell him to come here at once—a man is terribly injured. If he is not in, bring some other doctor, but quick, quick!"

"Don't let any one come into this room, Grace," protested Monro, struggling to rise. "It's ours. No one has a right here but you and me."

She placed her hands on his shoulders and restrained him.

"Jim," she said, "tell me who did this?"

"Did what, Grace?"

"How came you wounded? Have you been in any accident?"

"Oh, that! Let me see—that was the police—they clubbed me."

"When? Where? Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. A long time ago."

"No, no. Tell me about it. Was it last night?"

"I think it was. Yes, I was in a cell all night, but they kicked and clubbed me, six to one. I couldn't help myself. I was alone, you know."

"Are you wandering, or is this true? *Can* it be true?"

There was a tap at the door.

"Dr. Marshall, miss."

The physician came in.

"Doctor, this is Mr. Monro, a very dear friend of mine. He says he has been terribly used by the police—clubbed and kicked—but I think," lowering her voice, "that he is raving—delirious."

"I can quite credit anything about the police. It's not the first case I've had to treat," said the doctor, advancing and placing his hand on the head of the patient, who cowered from the touch.

"It's bleeding!" she cried, shuddering.

"That is all the better," returned the doctor. "Don't be alarmed."

"What is he doing here?" expostulated Monro, struggling to rise. "I won't have this man here. He's got the police outside. He's the police doctor the lawyer wanted to bring. I know him."

"Not at all," said Dr. Marshall, soothingly, "Do you think you can come with me? It's only a few steps."

"No, no. I'm not such a fool. I'm safe here."

"Doctor," whispered Grace, "if you let me manage him I am sure I can bring him to the surgery. He seems afraid of you."

"You'd better let me send for help, Miss Van Ness. No one can predict how he may act. When did this happen?"

"Last night, he said."

"And has he had no attendance since then?"

"I think not. He wandered in here. I thought he was suffering from the heat."

"That's bad. He should have been seen to long ago. I'd better send help to have him removed."

"I'm afraid it would excite him. He is in a condition to be led, not to be reasoned with. Leave your door open and keep out of sight until I get him into the surgery."

"You are a brave girl, Miss Van Ness. Yours is the better plan if it can be accomplished. Any excitement is bad. Sure you're not afraid?"

"Not in the least. On your way out please ask the maid to go downstairs and not stand in the hall. And, Dr. Marshall, oblige me by telling no one, not even my father, that Mr. Monro wandered in here."

After a pause of a few moments she turned to her guest, who was pleased now that they were alone again.

"Are you ready, Jim?"

"Oh, quite ready. You are going with me then?"

"Yes."

"We'll go up through the park, then along the Hudson till we come to the lake?"

"Yes."

"And you'll take my hand, Grace?"

"Yes."

"Oh, that's fine. Wait just a moment."

He was standing beside her, smiling. Taking her sleeve between his fingers, he tore the frail material from the shoulder down, exposing the white, firm arm, then bent his head and pressed his lips against the snow-pale flesh, leaving a tint like the rose. "That's the advantage of the rags, you see."

"Yes."

"Now give me your hand."

"The other hand, Jim. The bared shoulder should be next the ragman."

Jim laughed with quiet satisfaction at this, and so they went out together, hand in hand, through the hall, down

the steps to the street, fortunately deserted. They walked slowly, he leaning more and more heavily upon her, and at the doctor's house paused, breathing hard.

" Is this—is this the mountain, Grace? "

" Yes. One more effort and we are safe."

" What an awful thing—if after all—we came to the foot—and—and couldn't climb."

" God—is not so cruel as that, Jim," said the girl with a sob.

He laboured up, step by step, failing perceptibly.

" Doctor, doctor! " cried his guide, " come quickly; help us."

But Jim stumbled on the threshold, flung his hands to his head and pitched forward, prone in the hallway.

CHAPTER VI

"O GOD DEFEND ME! HOW AM I BESET!"

THERE is nothing more complete and satisfactory in fiction than those stories relating to the discovery of something mysteriously hidden; a theme of which a French writer will make a volume and an American a short tale. The highest pinnacle of the art was probably reached by Edgar Allan Poe in that incomparable literary gem, "The Purloined Letter." An important document is acquired by a prominent official—a document compromising the honour of a queen. It must be regained, and the whole admirable police system of France is at the disposal of the searcher, together with the aid of hired bravos who may waylay and even murder with impunity the supposed holder of the note. Yet the combination is frustrated; all the usual tricks of the trade are valueless; the document is not forthcoming. Then a casual outsider (it is always an amateur who succeeds where professionals fail) piles one little detail above another, and there, at the top of the heap, is the missing letter. If the idea had come to Dumas he would have made one novel and twenty sequels to it. Poe flipped it carelessly to the public in as many pages, yet it remains today a supreme example of its class.

Nature is not artistic, as Mr. Whistler is said to have remarked. She cares nothing for climaxes. In everyday life a man fits in all the apparent trivialities one to another, but the purloined letter is not discovered.

When Benjamin McAllister set out to find the missing woman, his whole mind was concentrated upon the task, and he forgot the huge establishment on Sixth Avenue as completely as if it had never existed.

He leaned back in his seat on the westward bound

train and spread out before his intellect the detached fragments of the puzzle he had to solve, joining link to link with patient accuracy. Impulse, rather than reason, had led him to buy a ticket to Chicago. In the West was his own beginning, and somehow the West beckoned him, and he obeyed the summons. Now he seemed to have an eternity of leisure before him, although the train on which he travelled was one of the fastest.

This was no sudden flight which Constance had taken, but a desertion premeditated and prepared for. That he had gathered from her letter. She would make for a definite point arranged beforehand. Had she any money with her? It was unlikely that she possessed a large amount. During their life together he had always been the cashier, she asking him for what she wanted, and getting it without question—if he had it. His memory, raw after reading her letter, now accused him. Was it a fact that she had often shrunk from the asking, giving apologetic reasons, pleading the inevitableness of her need? Could such a feeling have been possible? If she had come to him a wealthy woman, instead of merely in possession of the clothes she wore, would he have hesitated to ask her for what money he wanted? Certainly not; he would have been glad to accept it from her, because he loved her. What difference should money make between two people who cared for each other? What matter which was the giver and which the receiver? Yet might it not be because she came to him penniless and he was the maker of their money that there was an ever-increasing reluctance to require from him any share of it? Why had he never thought of placing a bank account at her disposal? Any time these last few years he might have done this, and would have done it if she had spoken the word. But she never gave a hint of that or any other of his imagined failings; each fault, trivial in itself as a snowflake that might vanish at a breath, had been allowed silently to accumulate all these years unsuspected by him until he was suddenly overwhelmed by the avalanche that had formed. It was unfair, unfair, unfair.

Yet now after all, he possessed everything and she had nothing. She might possibly be in want and he a millionaire! Oh, for the chance of slipping unnoticed a thousand dollars into her pocket! His eyes dimmed and filled and he turned them to the flying window, that callous or curious fellow-travellers might not notice such evidence of unmanliness.

He shook himself free from the grasp of recollection. The past was past; the present clamoured to be grappled with. She must have determined to earn her own money. How? A most capable housewife, as was shown in their own poverty days, and all America groaning under arrogant domestic incapacity, here was an opportunity; but he dismissed it without a moment's consideration. An American woman will slave in her own home, but she will not work in the kitchen of another for any wage that may be offered. She was qualified as a teacher, and to that profession she would turn; advertisement had either been inserted in a newspaper, or one already there had been answered. What paper? None in New York certainly. The local sheet of her own home had always come to her. During the first year of their married life McAllister had sent in a subscription, and the paper had continued to come ever since, with the pathetic confidence which the rural editor has that the delinquent subscriber will ultimately pay, or the firmer assurance that the law will enforce a settlement when the amount becomes large enough to justify action. In that journal then the advertisement had appeared. The moment he arrived in Chicago he would order, through the news company, a complete file for the past six months and he would search each column to trace the situation she had secured. He had a dim idea that the certificate or diploma, authorising her to teach in a school, was good only in Illinois. It would be simply a matter of detail to get a list of the teachers and assistants in every school of that state. Failing Illinois he would search one state after another; there was only a limited number of them. Would she abandon her own name? Possible, but unlikely. There was something

straightforward in her nature which would shrink from the adoption of an alias. She would be teaching under the title of Mrs. McAllister or Constance Fraser.

Would she visit her own home? No. Her parents would know nothing of this disruption if she could prevent the knowledge reaching them. She was proud in her quiet way and would be loath to admit that she had made a wreck of her life. Then why had she not warned him against going to them as she had counselled him against recourse to detectives? Probably because the thought had not occurred to her. One could not remember everything at such a moment. She had married in opposition to the will of her father; she had made her choice and must abide by it; she could not add so great a grief to her mother's burden; her native town might learn of her failure, but not through any confession of hers.

Thus McAllister reasoned himself to Chicago. His reasoning was good, and his deductions, in the main, accurate, yet never once was the missing woman at the end of a clue. His natural confidence sustained him through many a disappointment, but now and then periods of deep depression came upon him, and the world looked blue. Certain cities and towns were ever afterward associated in his mind with boding misery, and the utterance of their very names would chill the brightest day.

He was passing through one of these valleys of gloom in Cincinnati. The State of Ohio had been thoroughly but fruitlessly searched, and he sank into a chair in the vast hall of the hotel a completely discouraged man, lacking the energy to move further east, in continuation of his unavailing quest. The sights and sounds of a big hotel's activities went on around him unnoticed. He sat there a figure of despondency, hands deep thrust in his trousers pockets, hat drawn down over his eyes.

"Number 37, Number 37," a boy was calling in high plaintive tones and getting no answer.

"If I could write as Connie can," muttered the man to himself, "I'd go to my room and put down just how I feel, and I'd keep the paper, so that if ever I got dis-

couraged again I'd read it, and know the lowest point a man can reach—and live."

"Number 37, number 37."

"I can never feel worse than I do now. Even if I knew she was dead—why—that ought to be worse, of course—but I don't know. I guess the accumulation of all the failures which I bear up under at the time kind of comes down on me at once, all of a heap—and that way—"

"Number 37. Telegram for number 37."

"I wonder if the things I didn't do heaped themselves up on Connie like that until she couldn't bear them any longer; yet why didn't she speak? I'd have shouted."

"Number 37," wailed the boy, going down a corridor, his cry diminishing.

Some sentinel in McAllister's brain was warning him; some alert remnant of his active mind was on duty while the rest remained dormant. It aroused him. He drew in his feet; pushed back his hat.

"Hey, boy. Bring that here. I'm 37"

The boy came forward with an injured air. Why hadn't he said so long ago? He was there all the time.

McAllister tore open the envelope. It contained several sheets; an unusual thing with a telegram. He read and sat motionless for a few minutes, then rose laboriously and went over to the marble counter, with the bearing of an old man.

"What time is there a train for New York?"

The clerk told him.

"When does it reach there?"

The clerk consulted a folder and stated the time.

"Secure a berth for me on that train, and have my bill ready."

"All right, Mr. McAllister."

He went over to the telegraph corner, wrote a message and paid for it, then took the elevator to his floor and locked himself in Number 37. He spread the telegraphic sheets on the table and stood looking at them.

"Funny, what a woman will say in a message," he

murmured. "She thinks it as secret as a letter. Enough to bankrupt a business in itself, that telegram. Poor Jim, poor old Jim!"

He had to clear his eyes once or twice before he could read the words again.

"Benjamin McAllister, Grand Hotel, Cincinnati.

"Come to New York at once. James Monro has been clubbed nearly to death by the police, and now lies in Compton Hospital hovering between delirium and unconsciousness. He is suffering from concussion of the brain and brain fever. Your business is in peril and will be ruined if you remain longer away. I have asked Holderness to assume charge until you return, but don't delay. Telegraph me the hour and station of your arrival and I will meet your train with the carriage.

"GRACE VAN NESS."

The reader of this serious communication walked up and down the room, and for a time it seemed that the message had made small impression on him, as a man already soaked by the rain cares little that he has stepped into the brimming ditch. But by-and-by the news began to bear him down and his bent shoulders bowed still further under it. At last he paused, sank on his knees beside the bed and buried his face in the counterpane, shaken with grief.

"O God, O God, why hast Thou forsaken me? What have I done, what have I done? Has this last come upon me in my darkness because I said I was on the lowest step, and now there is another, and perhaps another still? O God, have pity on me, a broken man. I have vaunted and I am humbled; I was a braggart and am laid low. But, O righteous Lord, visit not my shortcomings upon the innocent. Jim was patient and true and faithful—the better man—the uncomplaining, honest heart. Just and merciful Father, show Thy justice and mercy to him, and let Thy wrath fall on the head that merits it. Wipe me from the face of the earth I cumber—I am not wanted—there is not a living soul

that needs me; a boaster, vain of his strength; but in my stead, spare Jim, who never in thought or deed did harm to the least of Thy creatures. Restore him to health and strength and sanity.

"If it be Thy will that what, in vanity, I called the work of my days and nights is to meet wreck, save yet a remnant for my wife. Let her not feel the yoke of dependence, the grasp of poverty. Never allow a doubt to visit her of the step she took, for it was of Thy wise ordering; but if I am to live, oh, give her back to me, that thus I may atone. And now, O God, direct Thou my feet; clear my wearied brain of all weak human purposings, and leave it waiting untrammelled for Thy commands; make it sensitive to receive, quick to understand; and this I ask for the sake of Him that suffered as man and bore it as God."

CHAPTER VII

"WILL RAIN HOT VENGEANCE ON OFFENDERS"

MANY an eye turned for a second glance at the superb young woman who paced the platform waiting for the western train, now some minutes overdue. Grace Van Ness was entirely self-absorbed, taking small note of the throng around her. She conned in her mind the coming interview with McAllister, trying to surmise the line of action he would take, resolved to influence him from it if it ran counter to her own fixed purpose, yet fearing she might not succeed, for she knew him to be a strenuous man, overpowering opposition rather than yielding to it; tenacious until he had wrenched success from reluctant circumstance. She was determined not to reveal her love for the young man now laid low, but of that she had little fear; McAllister was colour blind to any hue except the tint at which he habitually gazed. He was so single-minded, so intent on the subject immediately under discussion, that an inadvertent phrase, an incautious admission had no effect upon him. He always took the straight road, and had no wandering eye for the by-paths.

The sonorous clangour of the swaying engine bell announced the approach of the train; the girl roused herself from reverie and became alert. People eager to be in the turmoil dropped off the slowing train like ripe fruit from a shaken tree. The passenger she sought was one of the last to step down, and this struck her as singular. She watched him with dismay as he quitted the car timorously, as if afraid of a stumble. Was this bent ghost the man on whose strength she had counted? Had the blow that left her straight against the storm fallen so heavily on him? Then was friendship greater

than love; he submissive and crushed; she tingling for revenge. The hope that had buoyed her, that bade her look forward to a coming champion, died in her heart. This bowed figure did not tread with the free step of the conqueror; his was the faltering walk of the countryman timid of the town.

"Mr. McAllister."

"O, Miss Van Ness. How is he?"

"There is no change either for the better or the worse. I sent up to the hospital, knowing you would be anxious."

"Yes, yes. That was good of you, and it is kind to meet me here. What do the doctors say?"

"They are non-committal. They say he has great bodily strength, and that this is in his favour; but they always say that."

"Yes; nevertheless it's true. Now is the time when Jim's straight life will stand his friend. Poor old Jim; what in Heaven's name did they club him for?"

"I don't know. Come this way, Mr. McAllister. The carriage is here. Would you like to drive first to the hospital? You won't be allowed to see him, you know."

"I suppose not. Poor Jim! poor Jim! But we'll drive there, if it isn't taking you out of your way."

"Out of my way? Why, Mr. McAllister, that's what I am here for."

He murmured disconnected thanks and she gave brief directions to the coachman; then they stepped into the carriage.

"Now, Mr. McAllister, what have you made up your mind to do? Jim—Mr. Monro is in good hands, with the best attendance in New York. You can do nothing further for him."

"Tell me about it, Miss Van Ness; when did it happen?"

"On the night of Decoration Day. He was arrested on some pretence or other, and taken to Oswald Street police station. It seems he is recorded there as having been drunk and violent. He resisted the police, they say. He was brutally assaulted, thrown into a cell, kept

there all night, and let out on bail next morning. He seems to have spent part of the day in his own rooms, but went to the store in the afternoon. Mr. Holderness noticed that he was not in his usual form, but Mr. Monro said that he had been up all night, and Holderness thought no more of the matter. He appears to have been the last to leave the store, and no one knows where he went, but late that night he came to the door of Dr. Marshall's house and fainted on the threshold. Dr. Marshall is a neighbour of ours and an old friend of my father's."

"Oh, that's how you came to hear about it. What a lucky thing."

"Dr. Marshall treated him and took him in an ambulance to the hospital and asked the doctor to get the best advice and secure the best accommodation. He has done so."

"How did the doctor know who he was?"

"Well—well—you know—your telegram was found in his pocket—the telegram from Cincinnati."

"I see. And that's where you got my address?"

"Yes, and telegraphed you next day, after asking Holderness to take charge."

"When it was to be, how fortunate it all turned out. Miss Van Ness, you have proved a friend indeed, as you have done before."

"Well, you see, I am interested in the store."

"Of course, of course. We must all do our best—under guidance—under guidance."

"Then what is the first thing you propose to do?"

"I—I don't know."

"You don't know? Haven't you made any plans?"

"No. I tried to avoid making them."

"Why, Mr. McAllister, you amaze me. Do you mean to say that you have marked out no course of action since you got my telegram?"

"No. I shall have to set about getting some money, I suppose. Over a hundred thousand dollars will have to be raised somehow; so Jim said in his last letter. I didn't think things were as bad as that. I thought per-

haps you could assist me there. If you would say a good word to your father—"

"My father is in San Francisco; has been west for three weeks; won't be home for a month yet."

The girl was leaning back in the carriage, lips tightly closed, a flashing despair snapping from her glorious eyes, as he glanced uneasily at her, she having answered him so shortly.

"Well, I can hold off for a month. He could help me to get up a little syndicate, your father could—I know times are hard, but—"

She roused herself, and the words faltered on his lips.

"A little syndicate! Money, money, money, and your friend—the man who stuck by you through thick and thin lying at the gates of death, flung against them by those unscourged ruffians."

"But—but you said yourself that we can do nothing more for Jim than is being done for him. Willingly would I take his place— Yes, he has stuck by me as you say; no one knows better than I how true-hearted he is. Money? Every cent I possess or hope to possess I'd squander to see him well again. But what can I do? What can I do?"

"Do? You can crush the nest of vipers that stung him."

"But that won't help Jim, Miss Van Ness. That is mere revenge, from which we should clear our hearts. 'Vengeance is mine and I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

"I wonder how often that scriptural phrase has been used as a shield by cowards afraid to do their duty? But I can match it. 'Slay and spare not,' saith the Lord. I can't give you chapter and verse, but I'm sure it's in the book. If vengeance is the Lord's, surely we are His instruments."

"Yes, yes, we are, but we must guard against taking our own human passions for the mandate of heaven."

"We are as the Lord made us, human passions and all."

"Yes, but our passions are for us to curb. You cry for vengeance—"

"I don't."

"Then I have misunderstood you."

"I dare say. I am merely at this moment learning the kind of vengeance the Lord has in store for those brutes. That vengeance will fall is certain."

"Why do you think so?"

"Listen to me, Mr. McAllister. I have no brother to whom I can appeal; my father is away, and would not understand my feeling if he were here. I looked to you, the life-long friend of the stricken man—as toward the indignant personification of justice. I am bitterly disappointed. I find you an inert text-quoter, talking of syndicates; I ask you to act and you demur. Very well. The Lord evidently intends me to act in your place. I shall go down Broadway after I leave you, buy the best revolver to be had—"

"Miss Van Ness, you don't know what you are saying. Why—is it possible that after all you care for Jim —in that way—that—"

"Mr. McAllister, you were inane before; now you are stupid. Cannot you credit a woman with any civic pride? We women did not set up this government; you men did, and when one is clubbed to death I suppose the others are thankful they escaped. They want to make money; to form syndicates. Mr. Monro has nothing to do with my action, and no influence over it. Was there a man in question when Joan of Arc unfurled the banner of France and fought for it? I never heard of him. I think New York needs a Joan of Arc, and if New York will accept me, I am ready. The statue of Liberty in the harbour is a woman."

"Miss Van Ness, I will do whatever you tell me to, short of using the revolver."

"Then go at once to the chief authority of this town; tell him of the crime that has been committed and demand instant retribution on the scoundrels."

"I'm afraid you don't know New York. The chief of police will likely laugh at me. He will say—"

"The chief of police has nothing to do with the matter, nor the Mayor either. They are but creatures of the

Boss. Surely you read the papers. Go direct to Maguire."

"To Maguire? As well complain to the devil that one of his satellites has been swearing. Maguire is the biggest thief in Christendom."

"Nevertheless he is the Boss. He can act effectively if he likes, and there is an election coming on. Tell him how many employees you have and how many votes you can control. Use the wisdom of the serpent as well as the guilelessness of the dove."

"I shall do my best, and if that doesn't answer we'll try some other course."

"Thank you, Mr. McAllister, and now please forget all the harsh things I said to you. I didn't really mean them. When my father returns I will do my best to get him interested in your syndicate. He can influence others, so I think there will be little difficulty about it."

There was silence in the carriage until it stopped at the door of the hospital.

CHAPTER VIII

"MAKE A SCARECROW OF THE LAW"

WHEN you want to find the Boss, ask a policeman. McAllister did so, and learned that Maguire lived at the Windsor Hotel, had lived there for years and years, but was usually to be found in the Aboriginal Club, where he possessed a private room.

To this club, therefore, McAllister went, sent up his card to Mr. Maguire and was shown into a waiting-room at one side of the entrance. The hall porter could not tell him whether the Boss was in or not. There were a great number of people hovering about in this waiting-room hoping to see him. McAllister had spoken to the hall porter several times about the delay, but got little satisfaction, for that individual was evidently case-hardened against enquiry and people who wanted to know. One fellow-victim said to Ben, seeing his uneasiness:

"That's the Boss's carriage out at the door, and you may be sure that as long as it's there he'll be here. When it drives off he'll be in it, and you'll see no more of him this day."

McAllister thanked his informant and continued to wait. At last he saw an acquaintance come up the steps, and went out into the hall to intercept him.

"Hello, Sanderson!"

"Hello, McAllister! I heard you were out of town."

"Got back from the West this morning. I wanted to see Maguire, but I'm afraid of striking root in that waiting-room."

"Come on in with me. You're not a member, I take it? Well, come in. You'll be a friend from the West. We're barred from admitting New Yorkers. I'm not very well

acquainted with Maguire, but we're sure to find some one here who can take you up to him. He may be in the back room himself, but it's not likely."

They passed through a large apartment whose chief ornament was a huge oil painting of the Boss, then into a further room containing many tables with groups of politicians round them, drinking.

"Do you know the Mayor?" whispered McAllister's guide.

"No."

"Well, he's a good fellow, and if the Boss is available he'll fix you all right. Mr. Grady, I'd like to make you acquainted with Mr. McAllister of McAllister, Monro & Co. Say, John, Mr. McAllister wanted to see His Nibs. Could you arrange it for him?"

The Mayor had shoved back his chair and now stood up. He shook hands cordially and expressed pleasure at the introduction.

"Won't you join us, Mr. McAllister? You will, I know, Sanderson."

"Well, it's not in my day, John, but, seeing it's you, I don't mind," replied Sanderson affably.

"I never take anything, thank you," said McAllister.

"Well, gentlemen, just excuse me a minute. Come this way, Mr. McAllister."

They went upstairs to a door that was guarded by a man in uniform, but he gave way before the Mayor and threw open the door. In a big chair tilted back with his feet on the table sat a corpulent man, whose heavy jowl and face were of the unhealthy colour of paste; a man who drank too much, smoked too much, ate too much and walked too little. The sight of him brought no recollection to McAllister, save that which comes from meeting in the flesh one whose portrait has often been seen in print.

A group of men occupied various positions round the table, some sitting in chairs, others astride them, chin resting on the backs, others again standing. All looked over their shoulders as the Mayor and his companion entered.

The chief was relighting a half-smoked cigar.

" Are you busy, Maguire? Am I intruding? " enquired Grady.

" Not at all," cried the Boss cordially, throwing away his match, making a bad shot at an over-full spittoon. " Come right in, John. Anything new? "

" No. I wanted to introduce to you Mr. McAllister, who dropped in to see you."

The leaden eye of the Boss travelled over the newcomer, but, if dull, it was an eye long accustomed to measuring men and recognising those but casually met before. The feet of Maguire fell suddenly from table to floor, and the chair stood on four legs instead of two.

" What! It can't be. Do you tell me this is the pedler of Michigan? The boy I met when I was young and innocent on the heights of Ann Arbor? "

" Why—you're never—" stammered Ben, unable to get further.

" I'm damned if it isn't. Well, well, well, well, if this doesn't beat shooting ducks, as the old woman said."

He rose with difficulty to his feet and smote Ben a terrific blow on the back with his open palm.

" Come and sit down. Thank you, John, for bringing in an old friend—of me boyhood's days. Clear out every mother's son of you; I'm going to have a talk of old times. What'll ye drink? "

" I offered him the hospitalities of the club downstairs, Pat, but he doesn't drink," said the Mayor, as the others scuttled for the door.

" Well, well, and ye haven't got over that yet. It's far I've travelled beyond ye, then, for I'm beginning to take a sup with the rest of them," he chuckled, fatly, while McAllister stared at him, trying to see in this unwieldy form any attribute of the clean-limbed young athlete who had so easily overcome himself and friend on the dusty road of Michigan.

" They're waiting for me downstairs," said the Mayor, " so I'll leave you two together."

" All right, John. Just tell the gossoon at the door to let nobody in. Let's see. Your name was Jim, wasn't it? "

"No. That was my friend Monro. Ben is my name."

"Ah, yes, so it was. I remember now. I never liked the other fellow, but you were a white man clear through. Well, now, it's nice of you to have dropped in to see an old friend this way. And where did ye settle down at last, for of course you're not peddling now? In Detroit, I suppose?"

"No, I'm right here in town. I'm head of McAllister, Monro & Co. on—"

"What! That big place on Sixth Avenue? Well, strike me blind if this isn't a queer world!"

The Boss leaned his arms on the table and gazed across at his visitor, radiating good nature and childish pleasure at the encounter.

"Say, you're never the McAllister that built that fine house up Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes."

"Well if that doesn't beat pig-sticking! And you and me rolling round over each other on the dirt road out West without a cent in either of our pockets. Say, Ben, this is a great country!"

"It is that."

"And why the devil did you never drop in on a man before this late day?"

"Why didn't you drop in on me?"

"I had no more idea than the man in the moon that you—"

"Neither had I that you were the Boss."

"Is that true now? Well, well. An' ye came in just by accident like?"

"Yes. On business."

"Well now that's strange. I came near seeing you on business myself a while ago. You used to be a kind of a religious cuss, so can you tell me who was that fellow in the Bible that envied the other man his possessions and did a dirty trick to get it? I disremember him at the moment, an' ye were always glib at the Scriptures."

"David with Uriah's wife perhaps?"

"No, no. I'm talking about real estate now."

"Naboth's vineyard maybe."

"That's it, that's it. Well, your house has been a regular Naboth's vineyard to me. You see, my wife took a fancy to it. She thought it 'ud be a fine place to hold Christian Science matinees in and to lodge the brethren and sisters when they came to town. She's great on Christian Science. I say to her: 'Good gracious, isn't the Windsor Hotel big enough for ye? Lodge them there for the good of trade.' But she wants a house of her own, an' she wanted that house. Well, I found out it wasn't to be had, for a Dutchman, or a Jew, or somebody offered you thousands above what it cost, an' ye wouldn't look at him. That's why I was going to see you on business, but I wasn't going to pay all me hard-earned savings in no such profit as you seemed to want. So I'm thinking of duplicating the place further up the street, an' I tell you I'm not stuck on the job, because I've enough trouble on my shoulders as it is. But I got even with you, for I told the boys to stick you for a contribution of ten thousand dollars to Tammany. Did they do ut?"

"They did."

Maguire threw himself back in his chair and laughed riotously, his sides shaking like earthquakes.

"Oh, that's rich. Little did I think I was turning down an old friend who lent me his peddling licence when I hadn't one of me own. Well, well. I know why ye called to see me now, Ben, an' it's all right." He pressed the button and the doorkeeper came in. "Tell Murchison to come here and bring the assessment book with him."

Presently a young man entered carrying a huge volume.

"Turn to McAllister, Monro & Co. What's against them? Ten thousand, is it? Very well; that's marked off. Divide it round among all those that haven't paid up. It'll learn 'em to be quick at settling. All right now. Ye can go. See that there's no mistake, and that these people are not bothered again. That's all."

The young man departed with his amended book. Ma-

guire rubbed his thick hands together gleefully, for all his life it pleasured him to oblige a friend. "We've wiped that off the slate, an' if they trouble you any more just you come to me. I'll know your card next time I see it. It's a fine thing to be generous at the expense of somebody else, and now that I've thrown off ten thousand dollars what'll you do for me on that house—that Naboth's vineyard? Or won't you sell it at all at all? Or do you want a Jew's profit?"

"I'll sell. I don't want anybody's profit. You threw off ten thousand dollars without my asking; now I'll throw off ten thousand dollars without your asking. I'll show you all the bills, and take ten thousand dollars less than the place cost me."

"Indeed you'll do nothing of the sort. Your ten thousand dollars is your own, and mine was somebody else's. If I object to be a Jew on one side of the fence, I'm not going to be a Jew on the other. I'm an honest dealer. What did it cost you?"

"I don't know exactly. Nearer four hundred thousand dollars than three hundred thousand. The papers are all in the safe down at my office. You see, my wife never cared for the place. She was brought up in a cottage, and has no use for a palace."

"Do you tell me that now? It's funny how women differ. My wife was raised in a farmhouse. Begobs, you know her!"

"Mrs. Maguire? No, I don't."

"Thunder and turf, you do. She was Lottie Byfield, in that Michigan farmhouse we stayed at."

"Is that a fact? Then I remember her well."

"We had a great misfortune, Ben; lost our two children. It came near to killing Lottie; I believe it would have killed her if it hadn't been for this Christian Science she took up. Do ye know anything about that now?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, it's a great scheme. I don't understand it thoroughly myself, but it means that nothing much matters anyhow. If ye get a kick in the stomach it isn't there at all, but on somebody else, so there's no use in

you making a fuss about it; do ye see? It's a mighty consoling contraption, but it never eased my pain any for the loss of me two little kids, an' the remembrance comes over me like a wave sometimes, till I gasp for breath, an' in the most unlikely places, too. In a political meeting, or when I'm making a speech, I hear their voices behind me, although I'm thinking of something else, and I turn sharply round, but I see nothing, because there's nothing there, or because my eyes are not in condition. It's a long time ago now, but their voices get clearer instead of fading away, as one might think, an' perhaps that's because my health's kind of broke. I'll die in the good old Catholic faith, Ben, when me time comes, and purgatory will melt out of me all that's not fit for their company, an' I'll see the kids again. Poor little souls! they needed no touch of it; they got their purgatory as they left, an', please God, it was short an' they knew nothing of it." The heavy throat thickened, the Boss left his chair and walked to the window, looking out for a few moments. Ben sat there in silence, not knowing what to say, dimly remembering the tragedy. Maguire was the first to speak.

"Ah, well, we were talking of new houses and modern things. One gets rambling here and there when they meet an old friend. An' so ye're a married man. Well, I know one thing, you're a good husband. Your wife should be a happy woman. God! You're not like me, keepin' the papers from her so she'll not see what other folks think of me."

"I don't suppose any of us are as good husbands as we ought to be," said Ben dolefully.

"An' that's true for ye. Remember, I'm not admitting for a moment that everything the papers say of me is gospel fact. It's not. I believe in honesty in politics, an' if this country wants that same, let it begin. It isn't for the poor office-holder to begin. He's chucked in an' he's chucked out, an' his honesty is counted neither in his appointment or his dismissal. A country gets just what it deserves; just what it pays for. A man's first duty is to his wife and family. If he knows that, no matter how

hard he works for his country, or his city, or his town, no matter how honest he is, he'll be fired at the first change of administration; he'd be a fool not to take what he can get while he's got the chance. The people are jewing him; why shouldn't he jew them? Do you know there's not an embassy in the gift of the United States that a poor man dare take, because the place will cost him from three to ten times more than his salary? Is that honest of this country? Is it democratic? I say it is not. The New York Central railroad pays some of its chiefs more than the President of the States gets. It pensions its good men when they are too old to work. It never asks a man whether he is democrat or republican, but is he fit for the place. It don't bounce a man because Jones instead of Smith bobs up in Washington. Why should this country be less sane and less honest than the Vanderbilts? If New York had said to me, 'Here, Pat, you're a man of brains. If ye work for the city ye can't expect to make a fortune like McAllister, for he has nothing else to do, but we'll see that neither you nor your wife wants for anything. We'll give you ten thousand dollars a year, an' the half of that when you're used up.' Why it 'ud 'a' had the most capable man and the most honest man in the United States. But instead of that it gave me two thousand dollars a year and threw me out when another man wanted the place. Then I was like the fellow in Ireland when he saw the pile of fish on the dock, and he being the thief of the town the owner said, 'Mike, I'll give you sixpence to leave them fish alone.' Mike walked round the pile, looked at it, shook his head and said, 'Thank you, I can do better.' That's what I say to New York."

"But he stole the fish."

"He took what he needed, I daresay. So do I, but I don't call it stealing. It's getting what my brains entitle me to. And I give good value for the money. New York is to-day the best governed city in the whole world. There is no place on earth where a man has a better chance to get along; where he can make more money, an' you sit there an example of what I say."

"I don't know about that, Mr. Maguire. I sit here for the purpose of proving to you the contrary. I did not come to see you about that ten thousand or about the house. I came to you, who have no official connection with the city, because I am told everywhere that the usual channels of justice, which should be open to all citizens, rich or poor, are practically closed to those without a pull. I sit here because my partner, Monro, the person you do not like, lies at the point of death in Compton Hospital, clubbed into insanity by the captain and his men at Oswald Street police station. Arrested on a trumped-up charge, probably because he refused to pay that ten thousand, manhandled, left insensible and crushed all night in a cell without water or attendance, let out on bail next morning, bail for a crime he had not committed, turned on the streets to die, if it so chanced, he staggered raving into the house of a stranger, and thus got first succour. There is the work of your free city, Mr. Maguire."

The Boss sat back during this recital, a thunder-cloud gathering on his brow, a gleam of almost fiendish anger darkly lighting his heavy eyes. When the ghastly catalogue was finished he broke into a torrent of oaths, terrible to hear, until McAllister shrank appalled in his seat. Maguire seized the crank of a telephone which apparently led to police headquarters and turned the handle savagely. "Where's the chief? Send the chief to the 'phone at once. Look here, chief—that you? How about Monro fanned at Oswald Street station? What! Resisted arrest? Resisted hell!—I know the man. Haven't your damned ruffians any brains but what they can club out of another man's head? You know I won't have that sort of thing, and it isn't the first time. Now you act at once. Dismiss every scullion there. Arrest the captain and every one who raised a club, and see that they're railroaded where they belong. What? It's Maguire, that's who it is, and don't make any mistake about it either. Oh, I don't want any apologies. You jump, that's all, and have those men in the cells within half an hour."

He hung up the receiver and seemed to subside rather than sit down in his big chair, the excitement disappearing as suddenly as it had arisen, leaving his face a mottled chalk colour. He drew his handkerchief across his brow and breathed with labour.

"That's the material we have to work with, Ben, and it's poor stuff and bad stuff. It breaks my heart to hear what you say. Sure I had no feeling against the poor man, an' when I said I didn't like him, that's long past and I know nothing of him. Is he badly hurt?"

"Yes."

"The murdering scoundrels. Put a pig in a parlour, an' he's still a pig. I'd like to pay all expenses and give what compensation—".

"Oh, there's no need of that. You've done more than I looked for."

"Well, as the Christian Scientists say, there's little use worrying, but I'll have the prayers of a church that amounts to something put up for him, an' that's all I can do. Let's hope for the best an' be prepared for the worst. I mustn't get wrought up like this. I'm not the man I used to be, when forty rod couldn't phase me. Let's talk about the house. You'll sell?"

"Yes. Would it be cash down, or when could I get the money?"

"To-morrow if you like; to-day if you need it."

"Any time. The house is furnished throughout. I suppose you'd want to furnish it yourself, but it has never been occupied."

That'll be as the missus says. It 'ud suit me all right as it is. Can we go through it now?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll just telephone Mrs. Maguire to be ready for us. My carriage is at the door."

"Here is the key."

"You're coming with us?"

"I think not. You and Mrs. Maguire can discuss the matter better alone."

"Nonsense. I want you to meet Lottie. You'll not know her. She's young in the face, but her hair is as

white as the driven snow, which is something I tell her she's not entitled to for years yet. Oh, come along, an' we'll settle the job in two minutes."

McAllister hesitated, but the proposal was too important to be jeopardised by any sentimental reluctance.

They found Mrs. Maguire waiting for them, a placid, happy, white-haired woman, and in her kind eyes lurked latent worship of her bulky husband. Respect for him, pride of him, deep affection for him were to be gathered from the gaze she rarely withdrew from him. It took no seer to tell that she had not the slightest remembrance of McAllister, but she greeted him sweetly. He was a friend of her husband, and that was his passport. She introduced to him Mrs. LeGrue, a smiling lady from Boston, who was staying with her.

"Don't talk politics," Maguire had whispered to him, but there was no need for the caution. The subject was far from the minds of the ladies. McAllister gathered that Mrs. LeGrue was high in the confidence of the Christian Scientists, had been a martyr in the cause, and Mrs. Maguire was no doubt a treasured member; she had built several churches for the order, including one in her own district in Michigan, where there was not a Christian Scientist in a day's ride.

Arriving at the deserted mansion, McAllister opened the heavy door for them with a feeling akin to that which characterises a superstitious person entering a haunted house. They all came in exclaiming at the beauty and breadth of the hall.

"What a perfect place for a meeting!" said the smiling Mrs. LeGrue, clasping her hands. "Why, there's even a pipe organ at the further side."

But McAllister was not listening to eulogy. He had picked up a letter that lay on the floor, probably shoved under the door, and was turning it over and over in his hands.

"Come along, girls," he heard Maguire shout boisterously, "and let Ben read his correspondence."

The letter was postmarked "Mauch Chunk" and had been addressed:

MISS CONSTANCE FRASER,
Care Mrs. McAllister,
Holland House,
New York City.

The name of the hotel had been marked out by the clerk, and the address of the residence further up the street added. The postmark showed that it arrived the day after he had left the empty house. Tremblingly he tore it open. Was it possible that chance now stepped in where reason had been thwarted?

"129 Carbon Avenue,
"Mauch Chunk, Penn.

"DEAR MISS FRASER—Wednesday will suit me better than later in the week. My husband will meet you at the depot, but should you miss him, or, what is more probable, should he not reach there in time, take a cab. All the drivers know our house. The children are most anxious to see their new governess, and I am sure you will like it here, although the place seems a little grimy to strangers at first.

"Yours faithfully,
"BLANCHE RICHARDSON."

Somebody was speaking to him; he heard the voice, as a submerged man, with the roaring of waters in his ears, hears a shout from the shore.

"What—what did you say?"

"Say? I say this house is immense; suits me down to the ground, furniture and all. It couldn't be improved."

"Couldn't it? That's funny."

"Funny that a purchaser should say so? Perhaps it is, but I'm an honest man. I'll take the shanty just as she stands, lock, stock and barrel. Why, Ben, what's the matter? You're white as a sheet and your eyes are swimming. No bad news, I hope?"

"I think not, but—but most of my news has been bad this while back, and—I'm scared, that's all."

CHAPTER IX

"WHY, THEN, LET'S HOME AGAIN"

A YEAR before, McAllister would have taken the first train to Mauch Chunk and gone direct to the house of Mr. Richardson. He would have consulted a time-table, estimated the distance between the station and Carbon Avenue, thus concluding his mission in the fewest number of minutes possible. Now, as he had confessed to the Boss, he was "scared," his nerve was gone; the most capable railway engineer who has been through a wreck is useless until he has had time to recover confidence.

Ben went to a hotel in Mauch Chunk, reconnoitred the house in Carbon Avenue as cautiously as a modern general planning an assault, once or twice gathered courage to attack, but on each occasion his resolution failed and he passed on as if he were the most casual wayfarer. He thought of writing to his wife from the hotel, but feared she would take alarm and be elsewhere to seek. He dreaded to face another disheartening campaign of fruitless search, and so was timid lest he should make a mistake of tactics now, when a meeting seemed inevitable. The meeting came, as it was bound to come, but through chance and not as a result of his designing. He saw her walking along the crowded pavement, tried to summon a fitting phrase to accost her, but could not, and merely stood there, his mind in chaos, until she came up, and then mechanically he stepped in front of her.

"I beg your pardon," she said, attempting to pass on the other side. He reached forward and touched her arm, when she raised her eyes in momentary alarm and looked at him.

"O Ben, have you been ill?" she cried, grasping his hand.

"No, Connie, no. Never better, never better."

He drew her hand under his arm and walked on in the direction she was going, neither of them speaking for a few moments.

"Are you happy in that place, Connie, at your old profession?"

"As happy as a woman ought to be who has deserted her husband. Were you happy to be rid of me?"

"No. Miserable. But I'm happy now that I've found you. I've only been at my office twice since you left; once the other morning, and once a month or two ago."

"Then you have been ill?"

"No; I've been travelling; West mostly. Here and there. Say, Connie, I must have a talk with you. Will you come to my hotel; we can't converse here in the street?"

She stopped and glanced at her watch, then up at him with a smile. "You gave me this watch. Do you remember?"

"Yes, but I hope you are not looking at it to tell me you haven't time to talk with me."

"That would be a change in our parts, wouldn't it, Ben? I was just seeing if it was too late for a train. We have time if we walk sharply."

"What! To New York? Will you go to New York, Connie?"

"In the opposite direction, Ben."

"Oh." His tone fell to the minor key again, disappointment in the inflection. They walked on rapidly in silence, and at the ticket office she had purchased two tickets before he thought of offering to do so. He seemed quite satisfied that she should lead, he following with docile concurrence. This was strange to her, and she was not sure that she liked it. For months past none had cared whether she did this or that; there had been no one to take the liberty of brushing aside her own inclinations, as if from the beginning of time it had been ordained that his will should be paramount, unquestioned. The freedom from all this should have been a boon to be prized above everything, yet somehow she

found herself yearning for the former McAllister, genially overbearing, rather than the unnaturally patient man beside her, nervously anxious to please. She missed the old confident ring in his voice; the air of decision; the feeling, after all, of being protected, cared for. She had often pictured their meeting, knowing he would find her if he set his mind to the task; he accomplished everything, and any attempt on her part to elude him for long was hopeless She had fancied him approaching in haste, grasping her by the arm, saying good-naturedly, but finally: "Hello, Connie; how are you? We've had enough of this nonsense. Come home," and it was likely she would have gone, swept away by the habit of deferring to him. But she had been entirely unprepared for the McAllister who at last accosted her, who followed unprotesting where she ordered, who suggested the hesitating manner of a convalescent, not yet sure of his feet on firm ground. This brought her always to the belief that he had been ill, in spite of his disclaimer. If he had not been ill, then was the change inexplicable, and a strange apprehension filled her heart, akin to the fear of those who have once had experience of an earthquake, and who never after regain confidence in the stability of the solid world. If the invariably successful Benjamin McAllister lost his masterfulness, in whom then could she look for it?

They took their places together in the train, and the journey proved short. They were the only passengers who got out at a way station in the gorge, and she led him by a path up the densely wooded mountain. Down the hill poured a crystal foaming torrent, in striking contrast to the larger amber-coloured river, up which the railway had conveyed them. The path, now on one side, now on the other of the various cascades, crossed the stream here and there by rustic bridges, with here and there a seat. Sometimes it passed under a waterfall, the shimmering liquid veil subduing the light and adding a delicious coolness to the transit. Deep dark pools seemed stations of rest, and racing rapids, whose spray-lashed, obstinate jagged rocks tore the water with up-flung

showers, were typical of action. The whole secluded stairway was embowered with rhododendrons and luxurious shrubbery, foam-fed and dew-sprinkled, while over all arched the primeval forest with glimpses of a blue, cloud-flecked sky, roofing the sylvan retreat. She brought him to a quiet arbour perched high above their starting point, the sound of roaring water subdued to a soothing rhythm through the mass of whispering leaves. They sat down together on a bench.

"There, Ben, I present to you Glen Onoko, and we have it entirely to ourselves. Often it is alive with excursionists, but to-day we own it as the Indians did, although they had no such modern improvements as seats, bridges, steps and a footpath. What do you think of it?"

"It is beautiful, Connie; I had no idea so smoky a town as Mauch Chunk had such a dell in its vicinity, although I have often passed through the place, flying on the fast express."

"The fast express! Yes, it goes by, and those who live on it see little of what is on either side of them, but they do get to their destination quickly."

"Ah, Connie, that's a rap at me, isn't it? It's like a sentence out of your letter. I thought it a hard letter."

"I'm afraid it was. Still, you should make allowance for the circumstances in which it was written. If one who commits a crime chooses to set forth his reasons when the deed is done, I don't suppose he writes very coherently."

"Connie, you did care for me once, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"When did you cease to care for me?"

"You never found that in the letter. A woman who had ceased to care would have stayed to enjoy the new house."

"A woman can't care for a man and leave him."

"Can't she?"

"It doesn't seem reasonable. Deeds speak louder than words."

"I'm not sure that they do."

" Certainly they do. Talk is cheap."

" So is air. Yet it is impossible to live without it."

" You surely knew that my whole life's work was simply devotion to you; that I valued success only to lay it at your feet."

" You never told me so."

" Did it need the telling? "

" It needed more than the telling, or the telling should have been reiterated very often to have been convincing. Why, Ben, there were times when you forgot my very existence for says and weeks. You were wholly absorbed in your business. You should not only have told me, but you should have given as much thought to the place and the manner of telling as you gave to the placating of some capitalist from whom you expected to obtain money, for I doubt, latterly, if the telling alone would have persuaded me of its truth. You should have brought me to a spot like this, as I led you just now, and then said all these things were for me, and I should have been pleased to hear it, not because I cared for the things, but because—because I cared for you—and you were with me."

" Connie, why didn't you speak? Why did you let me go on and on for years and never say a word? I'm not finding fault, you know, but why—why? "

" What I wanted had to come spontaneously, or it was of no value in my eyes. It could not be bargained for—extorted. I might have worried a little attention from you, perhaps, but you would have given the attention as you gave me the mone, I—demanded. You would forget next day, as you have forgotten that—I did speak. Do you remember when I proposed a little trip up the Hudson—not a whole day, of course, but a sail in the evening? You thought it an excellent idea, and advised me to go alone and stay all night. You would go to a hotel in New York. You didn't remember that proposal long enough to ask me ever after if I had gone, so now I inform you that I didn't go."

Ben made no reply; he was industriously cutting a notch with his pocket-knife in the arm of the seat.

"I must confess that when one puts it into words it looks like a case of petty feminine jealousy, and I don't suppose since the world began a woman ever had as a rival a block of buildings, but I have often gone and looked at that place on Sixth Avenue with hatred in my heart against it, saying, 'You hold my husband with a grip I cannot unloosen. His thoughts, sleeping or waking, are of you.' Once as I stood on the opposite side of the street, watching the crowds pouring in and pouring out, I was filled with wonder and amazement, in spite of my envy, that all this centre of activity had been created practically by one man, in one fraction of a short lifetime; you came hurrying out. I recognised you at once, Ben, in all that mob. You came at a gallop across the street, nearly knocking me down, as in your haste you ran against me, but you never noticed me. I watched you through the plate glass of the restaurant, standing by a counter, not having a meal, but gulping down some food, whatever happened to be nearest your hand, and I wondered who had told you you were hungry. You never would have thought of it yourself. Then out again and away across to your office. Always the office, the office, the office! I don't suppose you will understand my jealousy of it, but if you put a woman in its place, then perhaps you will comprehend."

"Suppose it had been a woman," said Ben, looking up from his carving. "Suppose I had been as devoted to another woman as I was to my work, what would you have done?"

"Just what I did do. I should have left you to enjoy each other's company, but I shouldn't have written you a letter."

"Is that awful letter to be regarded as a hopeful sign after all?"

"Perhaps it is."

"Now, Connie, if such a thing could be imagined as you becoming interested in another man, do you know what I would do? I'd slaughter him, if that were necessary, and I'd take you by the shoulders and give you a thorough shaking. I'd say: 'Here, now, you behave

yourself!' But you couldn't do anything on this earth that would make me abandon you."

"The inference is then that you—that you care more—"

"Love is the word, Connie."

"That you love me more than I love you."

"I think I do."

"I came to believe that you did not understand the meaning of the word, Ben. Why, if I loved a person I should delight to lure him off to some beautiful place like this; to converse with him and be with him alone. When have we ever seen any quiet spot outside New York since we were married? Do you remember on our wedding journey when the train stopped for ten minutes at a wooden platform overlooking Niagara Falls? I always think of that ten minutes as our honeymoon; you stood beside me, Ben, and pointed out the islands and the rapids. You had seen them all before, while I hadn't, and never once during that ten minutes did you glance at your watch. You think me foolish in remembering little things, I know."

"I don't. Life is made up of little things, I suppose. How curious it is that we are engaged at this moment in a contest as to which cares most for the other. And yet we have been separated, Connie. Are you glad to see me now, or were you sorry that I found you?"

"Very, very glad."

"Would you have come back to me of your own accord if I hadn't found you?"

"No."

"You are happy where you are, then?"

"No."

"Well, I don't understand women; that's all about it. If I were unhappy and wanted to see a person and knew where he was, I'd go to him by the quickest train that would take me."

"Have you really been searching for me ever since?"

"Yes."

"Was it a detective discovered where I lived?"

"I engaged no detective. No living soul knows what happened. I spoke to none about it."

"Not even Jim?"

"Not even Jim, poor old Jim."

"Why do you say that in such a doleful tone?"

Then came the story of his wanderings; of the danger to the business; of the disaster to Monro. She listened absorbed, gazing intently at him during the first part of the recital; then with bowed head during the remainder.

"Ben, Ben, what a wretch you make me out to be!" she moaned without looking up.

"Dear girl, I haven't even mentioned you, nor thought of attributing blame to you. It was all my fault —most of it."

"What a selfish, abominable creature I am!"

"Nonsense, Connie. No, no. If you will consent to give me another trial I'll do my best—"

"Oh, oh, oh—" she covered her face with her hands and wept without making further answer to his appeal, but when he put his arm around her and drew her toward him there was no resistance.

CHAPTER X

"WITH THEIR TONGUES DOOM MEN TO DEATH"

THERE was a plot hatched at the Aboriginal Club which differed from any that had ever before come to maturity in that political stronghold, for its object was the rescue of a man enmeshed in a silken net, the slender strands of which proved stout as steel against the assaults of united Tammany, the most powerful organisation the city had ever seen. The iron government of New York was set at naught by a little, smiling woman, who held to her rights and defied Mayor or city officialdom to budge her. In his splendid house Maguire lay ill. With the best medical skill at her disposal, the wife, serene and confident, would have none of it. Mrs. LeGrue, the martyr, was attending the ailing man, and as in multitude of counsel there is wisdom, eminent professors of the cult of Christian Science were bestowing upon him the benediction of absent treatment, from Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and other centres of light. They sent thought waves toward him, at stated hours, and from the spray of these mental breakers the invalid was to rise refreshed. The palace on Fifth Avenue was the Mecca of the Christian Scientists, and now that the strong man was prone none other was allowed to cross its threshold, be he Tammany or whatever else. Yet there was one exception. Three times the Mayor of New York was permitted to see the patient, and that through the special grace of Mrs. Maguire, who liked him, and knew her husband liked him. At each succeeding visit Grady saw that Maguire was in worse state than he had been at the time of the previous call. On each occasion Maguire had been delighted to see him, and had pressed him to come oftener. He lay on a

couch with a little table at his elbow, on which were placed a bottle of whisky and a box of strong cigars; two stimulants which the doctors at the club agreed should be kept from a man in his condition. But Mrs. Maguire believed that absent treatment would nullify any evil effects of present indulgence and refused to be influenced by the unenlightened advice of regular practitioners suggested to her by the anxious John Grady. The hopeless feature of the case was that Maguire himself was completely under the gentle influence of his wife and had the most optimistic belief in the ultimate effect of her ministrations. He was all right, he urged; a little scant of breath, perhaps, and rather too corpulent, but a few weeks at Muldoon's farm would remedy that as soon as he was on his legs again. As for a drop of whisky, the stuff never hurt anybody, and a cigar was a comforter.

On the conclusion of his third interview Grady was seriously alarmed. His friend was visibly failing, as any eye mght see, save that of his wife, who persisted in her evidently sincere belief that he was on the mend. She herself escorted Grady to the door. In the ample hall, which had witnessed so many devout gatherings of the Christian Scientists, he expostulated earnestly with her and begged her to allow him to bring Dr. Marshall to see her husband.

Mrs. Maguire heard him with the lenient patience with which one listens to the pleadings of a favourite child asking for something it may not have.

"I do not doubt, Mr. Grady, that Dr. Marshall is a most estimable man, and at another time or for any other purpose I should be pleased to have him visit us, but I cannot allow my husband's mind to be disturbed by the malign influence of a discredited school at the present moment. I am so sorry to refuse you even such a trivial request."

"It is not a trivial request, Mrs. Maguire. Your husband is a dying man. It isn't his mind that needs attending to, but his body. According to your own belief, Dr. Marshall can do no harm, and your husband's

friends, myself among the number, would feel very much easier if they knew he was in capable hands. Those absent people can go on with their praying just the same."

Mrs. Maguire smiled indulgently at this, as if it were rather a poor attempt at witticism.

"I will not have the influence of those absent people, as you call them, diluted by the presence of a symbol of old world ignorance like Dr. Marshall."

"Then their ministrations cannot be very potent if the whole aggregation are afraid of one regular physician. The doctor has no such fear; he is willing to come and do his best with the entire Christian Science community in full blast against him."

"'Ah, Mr. Grady, you speak flippantly, but I'm sure you don't mean half what you say, and I know you are a good friend of Patsey's, according to the light vouchsafed to you."

"God knows I would do anything for him, Mrs. Maguire, and I want to see every means tried that will give him a chance."

"I know that, I know that, and I assure you I value your friendship, Mr. Grady, and your sympathy. So does Patsey, poor boy, and it won't be long till he's among you again."

"Well, we need him badly enough, for there's an election coming on, presidential at that. There is no man who can steer the ship like Patrick Maguire, and the longer he is on his back the worse it is for the party."

Mrs. Maguire glowed at this praise of her husband. She liked to think of him as indispensable in affairs of state.

"I am always willing for you to see him if you talk politics, Mr. Grady. Now a regular physician would probably say it would do him harm, but I know better."

An idea occurred to the Mayor.

"Would you let him talk to a small delegation from the club? We are all anxious about the situation there —I mean the political situation of course—and a few words from Maguire will do us a lot of good. The

rank and file would obey any injunctions that they knew came direct from the Boss, which they wouldn't pay attention to if uttered by some one else."

"I have no objection at all. Let me know when they are coming. How many would there be?"

"Not more than three or four; two probably besides myself. As Mayor of the city I snall doubtless be asked to head the delegation."

"Very well. Come whenever you please. And now, Mr. Grady, will you do me a favour in return? Here is a little volume, small, but priceless. You can easily slip it into your pocket. Read it carefully, trying to free your mind from the ancient preconceived notions that still have such a hold on the world. When you have finished that book, if you study it in the right spirit, you will be less anxious in mind about the condition of my husband."

Grady sighed as he accepted the precious volume, so graciously presented to him by the imperturbable little woman, and took his leave with foreboding in his heart.

Thus the plot at the club was inaugurated. The Mayor proposed that Dr. Marshall and a specialist should accompany him to the house of Maguire, ostensibly to talk politics, actually to diagnose the case and devise means for the patient's betterment. For some time medical etiquette stood in the way. The practitioners refused to enter any household surreptitiously, without the sanction of the inmates, but the Mayor urged the seriousness of the case, the fact that both physician and specialist were personal friends of the sick man; that they were sure of his sanction at last, when he recovered, and much more to the same effect. Nice customs, courtesy to great kings, and medical etiquette bowed its head before the supreme necessity of saving the Boss. So the Mayor was enabled to notify Mrs. Maguire that on a stated day and at a stated hour the political delegation would wait upon her husband to learn his views anent the situation, city, state and national.

When the trio arrived at the house, the servant who

admitted them said that Mr. Maguire was awaiting them, and, on being ushered into his presence, the Mayor was relieved to find him alone, stretched, as usual, on the couch. Grady had dreaded the attendance of the wife, and was pleased to note her absence. The ailing man was in a state of feverish excitement. He had been wearying querulously for them, counting the minutes before their arrival, impatiently inquiring why they had not come, and now the effect of the tension was visible on his face, audible in the quick, panting breath.

" Ah, John, it's you at last. I thought you were never going to get here. Surely you're late. Who have ye brought along with you? Hello, doctor, it's you, is it? I didn't recognise you at first, and is that Dr. Watson behind you? How are ye, doctor? Two doctors and a lawyer! Begobs, a man must be in a bad state when such a deputation calls on him. ' Make your will,' says the lawyer, and ' Die double quick,' says the two doctors."

All this was boisterously shouted, Maguire trying to rise on his elbow, then sinking back exhausted on the pillows. His enumeration of the two professions and his comments thereon seemed to throw a restraint on the company, and he noticed this as he lay there, having given up the effort to assume a sitting posture.

" Ah, well, boys, ye mustn't mind me. It's only me fun. It's a poor joke, that's all. I've the greatest respect for learning, as John here knows, having had little enough of it myself. I'm mighty glad to see you, an' that's the truth. Sit down all of ye, an' tell the girl what ye want to drink. I think we've got everything in the house from German lager made in St. Looie to Frinch champagne concocted in California, so if ye don't see what ye want, ask for it, as the placards in the groceries say."

The two physicians drew up chairs, but Grady remained on his feet, for at the first mention of the word " doctor " there was a scarcely perceptible shaking of the curtains which divided that room from the next, and as Maguire finished the curtains parted and re-

vealed, standing in their folds, a placid-faced, white-haired little woman, calm and collected, a gentle smile on her lips but reproach in the eyes fixed on John Grady, who stood uneasily under their scrutiny. Lottie Maguire came forward, silent footed, and stood at the head of the couch without a word. Her husband's huge right hand was fumbling aimlessly among the pillows, and the woman placed her dainty white palm on his. Then over the little hand and engulfing it instantly closed the great fist. The touch seemed to permeate him with her own restfulness. She smoothed out his shaggy mane, long unclipped. The ailing man bent back his massive head and looked up at his wife, peace and contentment coming into his eyes as they lingered affectionately upon her.

Before this tableau of mutual love and trustfulness sat three men of learning and resource, baffled, without a word spoken, and knowing they were baffled.

"Ah, Lottie, dear, I'm glad you've come. Dr. Marshall, this is my wife. Dr. Watson, Mrs. Maguire."

The lady bowed serenely to the gentlemen.

"John Grady you know as well as I do."

"Yes, I know Mr. Grady," she said softly in accents sweet and tender, but with a significance entirely missed by her husband, which nevertheless made the highest official of the city quail before her. He stood a convicted traitor, yet conscious of loyalty to his dearest friend, which knowledge somehow failed to solace him.

"Well, boys, how about politics? Is everything coming our way, or are we going to be snowed under? Dr. Marshall, when did you begin to take such an interest in elections that you leave your work to come on a delegation? Troth, I never knew you to do that before. You're improving, begobs. I always looked on ye as a kind of Tammany mugwump. Ye remember what a hill of a fuss ye made about that man the police clubbed? Well, thunder and turf, ye patched him up all right enough, an' he's as well to-day as ever he was. That's one for you. It's increased your reputation wonderfully, so you should be thankful for the chance ye got,

but I felt as badly about that clubbing as any one, except the boys that did it, an' they're sorry in gaol."

" I never blamed you, Mr. Maguire," replied Dr. Marshall, mopping his brow.

" Patrick," said the Mayor, boldly cutting in now that he had lost all the lady's respect, and things couldn't be worse—" Patrick, as we are to talk politics, I think it would be better to talk it alone. Besides, it is of little interest to a lady."

Mrs. Maguire appreciated the cunning move, smiled, stroked her husband's hand and said nothing.

" Is it Lottie ye mean? Sure, John, she's as much interested in politics as I am."

" You've told me yourself, Pat, a dozen times, not to talk politics before Mrs. Maguire."

He was staking the friendship of the Boss on this reckless throw, and he knew it. Sudden fear sprang into the eyes of the invalid; a reminiscence of something not quite grasped by a strong mind weakened through long illness, yet intangibly, evasively recognised as existing. What was the flittering bogy? What was it he did not want his wife to know? There was something, but it had slipped his memory and now eluded search, yet the fingers of remembrance almost grasped its ever-vanishing skirts. The Boss was agonisedly disturbed. He struggled to sit up, breathing painfully, drops of perspiration standing on his brow. His wife bent over him, tenderly touching her lips to his. The fevered man relapsed on his pillow as if the brief contact were magic. A deep sigh escaped him, and his breathing became more regular. The bogy had been conjured away.

" Why, John, what nonsense ye're talking," he gasped. " I never said such a thing, an' ye know it. He's just trying to get a rise out of us, Lottie. He thinks that's a joke."

The woman lifted her head proudly, a glint of anger in the glance she now bent on John Grady. Her eyes said to him as plainly as words:

" Try your next trick, forsworn man, perfidious friend, and see who will be victor."

But Grady at last recognised defeat.

"I think we may as well go," he said.

"No, no," cried the Boss anxiously. "Why, we haven't begun talking yet. Watson hasn't opened his mouth since he came in, except to take a sip of liquor, John, here, is gabbing so much nobody else gets a chance, but that was always his way. You mustn't mind him."

The three were now standing up.

"Don't let them go, Lottie, dear. You know how much I wanted to see them."

The lady was all graciousness.

"I beg you to be seated again, gentlemen. It is indeed true that both my husband and myself have looked forward with pleasure to this visit, and although you are all busy men, yet I know you will not refuse my request."

The three sat down helplessly, as if mesmerised by her kindly smile, won over by her honeyed words.

"Ah, Lottie, it's you that's the persuasive angel, the right bower with no joker in the pack. You take every trick, my dear."

"That is truer than he imagines," murmured Grady to himself.

"Now, as I was saying, Doctor, when John, here, interrupted me, about that man Monro; ye see, I knew him in the old days out West, and I was mighty sorry when they tried to massacre him, but I can understand it easily enough. He has a high and lordly way with him, an' a policeman, as they build 'em nowadays, is not going to stand that. A policeman reasons as naturally with his club as John there with his tongue. They train a college man's tongue, but it's the policeman's right arm they develop in his school. So the outcome's conceivable, though ye can't get a mugwump to understand it. An' now, boys, right in this same line lies a great lesson for politicians. Never condescend. Do ye see what I mean? What's this the good book says—truth to tell I'm not as well up in it as in the daily papers—but I know the run of it, an' it will pay any man to

get a kindly priest to explain it to him, an' then act on it, as I've always done. Except ye become like one of these, why ye don't cut any ice at all, an' that's the gist of it. If I'm popular with the boys, it's because I'm one of them, an' they know it. I meet no man so poor but I've been poorer meself, an' none are in trouble deeper than I've been in, years agone. I'm not like a schnail. I don't carry me fine house on me back when I go down to the slums. I may be Mr. Maguire on Fifth Avenue, but I'm plain Pat down in the Bowery. I say, Doctor, do ye remember that poor little divil that was mangled by a cable car two years ago, when he cut across the thrack wid a bundle of papers under his arm? That was a finer job than Monro's, even, for there was hardly enough of the unfortunate beggar left to splice together again, an' ye did what ye could because I asked you to, an' wouldn't take a cent. Well, the other day that poor creature comes thumping up the avenue on his crutch, an' rings at the front door. He hands to the servant girl a bit of a bunch of flowers that he had squandered his miserable few pennies for, an' says, 'Give 'em to de Boss, an' tell him we's all sorry he's off his nut, an' hopes he'll—an' hopes—he'll soon be—on his feet again."

Maguire buried his face in the yielding pillows, his wife with flooded eyes tenderly soothing his hair, and for some moments there was a painful silence. The sick man recovered his calmness with an effort.

"Be God! gentlemen, I'd sooner have that bunch of flowers than if me neighbour, Vanderbilt, came t' see me wid ten thousand dollars in his fist; an' I'll look up that kid the moment I'm out again. Ah, well, we're all tarred with the same brush, an' a little kindness don't hurt any man, whether he's rich or poor. But this has nothing to do with politics. I can't get a word in edgeways because Grady's so anxious to hear himself talk. But don't you be worried about the election. That'll be all right. It's dead easy. All ye have to do is to play with the conscientious man. He wants to vote with his party, so give him the chance. Between the conscientious republican an' the conscientious democrat, splitting

the conscientious vote, we get in our own gossoon who's got some sense in the matter of government, an' everything's all right. That's the whole secret of New York politics. Elect a Democrat President, if it's no extra trouble, but sell him at a pinch if they'll hand over the city in return. The same with the Governor of the state, although he's more important to us than a dozen presidents. The great thing's the city. Tell the boys not to forget that. An' now, gentlemen, I'm feeling a little done up. I've enjoyed all ye've said, an' I want ye to come again, an' come often, an' bring as many as ye can with ye, for I like to see them, an' their talk does me good. I'll be down at the club next week, or the week after. Good-bye, an' I thank ye from the bottom of me heart for remembering a poor soul on his back. Give my love to the gang."

As Grady passed out he saw a picture that remained long in his mind; Maguire prone with closed eyes, in a state of exhaustion, and his wife bending over him, her cheek resting against his.

There was consultation after consultation at the club, but all futile. For once Tammany was checkmated.

A week after the visit of the outwitted delegation the Mayor was coming down the steps of the city hall to the carriage that awaited him. From the newspaper offices poured diverging streams of newsboys, as if a shrapnel shell had burst, scattering ragged urchins bearing fluttering sheets of evening papers. The cry that went up brought the Mayor to a sudden stoppage.

"*Death of the Boss! All about the death of Maguire! Boss o' New York dead!*"

Grady snatched a paper from the first comer and threw the boy a quarter. The front page was mostly billboard headlines, with a huge rough picture of Maguire. Only one paragraph contained real news, the rest was biography, flung in at the last moment, ready prepared.

"Patrick Maguire, Boss of New York, died to-day at 1.35 in his residence on Fifth Avenue. As our readers are aware, Mr. Maguire had been ill for some weeks."

"Drive up Fifth Avenue; Maguire's. As quick as *you can*," said Grady to his coachman.

In front of the house the Mayor saw a squad of police, with a crowd of young men ineffectually trying persuasion to get through the cordon to the door. The sergeant recognised the official and stepped forward, saluting.

" Is it true that Maguire is dead? "

" No, Mr. Grady. It's just them lying papers. Mrs. Maguire telephoned to headquarters and said her husband was pestered by the reporters, so he sent up a squad."

" That's right. Have you seen Mrs. Maguire? "

" Yes, sir; only a few minutes ago. She told me her husband was better instead of worse, and she's quite cheerful about him; if all this fuss don't hurt him. Will you go in, Mr. Grady? "

" I think I will."

Mrs. Maguire herself opened the door and greeted him pleasantly.

" I saw it was you," she said, smiling, " and so I came down myself, thinking you were not going to come in. Of course, it is only the reporters I want to keep away."

" It is good of you to receive me, Mrs. Maguire. There was a rumour down town that Patrick—was worse."

" Oh, yes; I heard of it. They said he was dead. Absurd! Won't you come in and see him? "

" If I may. You think it wouldn't trouble him? "

" Oh, no. He will be pleased."

" You are very kind."

She closed the door and led the way to the stairs, humming a tune as she preceded him lightly up the steps. Maguire was not on the couch where Grady had last seen him, and his wife held aside the curtains of the next room, saying:

" He is in here."

She went to the bed and flung back the sheet.

" O my God, my God! " cried Grady, staggering against the wall. There confronted him the closed-eyed smiling face of the dead, and the open-eyed smiling face of the living.

All grossness had departed from the still features of Maguire, as if the purging fires he half believed in during life had already consumed his defects, leaving only the broad white brow, the masterful nose, the firmly moulded chin, the large kindly mouth. The hair, brushed back and flowing on the pillow, gave a leonine appearance to the strong face and massive head; a classic bust chiselled in marble by that chief of sculptors, Death.

Grady turned his face to the wall and sobbed like a child. He possessed, to comfort him, no theory that death was a sham. That silent white mask proclaimed it terribly real, and no thought-wave from Boston could obliterate the actuality.

The abandon of grief in a grown man seemed to affect the little woman against her stubborn purpose. The smile became fixed; difficult to maintain. A glance from the emotional living to the impassive dead made her tremble and then give way. She sank on the bed beside her husband.

"O, Patsey, Patsey," she moaned, her cry, the forlorn wail of a broken-hearted woman. But the grim creed ultimately triumphed. Presently she gathered herself up and confronted the man who had turned to her. Waveringly she replaced the broken smile and gazed at him through dewy eyes.

"You mustn't think, Mr. Grady," she gasped, "that this momentary failure—is—anything—against my—my belief. No, no. That is eternally true, though human resolve is weak. My—my nerves are unstrung—that's all. I've been watching night and day—and am worn out. My dear husband is with me now—as he has been —as he always will be."

CHAPTER XI

"FROM CUPID'S SHOULDER"

WHEN James Monro was well enough to resume his position in the office, McAllister announced that he must be off again (like Flannigan, he added), but this time he would take Jim's advice, stay in one place, rest and get acquainted with his wife. Upon this plan Monro bestowed his approval.

"Now, Connie," cried McAllister on reaching the hotel, "Jim's in charge again, thank goodness, and I'm free. I propose we go off and supplement that ten minutes."

"What ten minutes?"

"Don't you remember? At Niagara Falls, of course. We're going to stay there in the biggest suite of rooms in the biggest tavern the town possesses, and hang the expense. Yes, by smoke, we'll go it, and hire a cab now and then. Sixth Avenue is making lots of money."

"My dear Ben, you mustn't think I want you to desert all your duties and simply play comrade to me. I hope you don't imagine—"

"Look here, Con, no nonsense. Pack up and don't give your husband any back chat. You're too much absorbed in business anyhow, and should take a rest every once in a while. We're going to Niagara Falls to pick up the remnants of a lost honeymoon—unless you would rather go somewhere else."

"I am more than content with Niagara."

"Then that settles it. Get ready."

So in due time they found themselves by the great cataract, with nothing to do but enjoy each day as it came, Ben developing into the most assiduous courtier that could be desired by the most exacting woman.

Constance was much interested in hearing of Grace Van Ness and once or twice questioned Ben about her, each time learning something he had forgotten to tell on the previous occasions.

"Had she ever met Jim before she called on you both in the office?"

"Oh, bless you, yes. It was Jim who knew her first, not I. He met her in Montreal, down in North Carolina, and I don't know in how many other places."

"Why didn't you tell me that before? I understand it all now."

"Understand what?"

"The whole situation."

"What is there to understand? The situation is simple enough. She has money in the firm, and so was anxious about it."

"No doubt. Did she threaten to shoot those policemen because she had money in the firm?"

"Oh, that. No. That was because she takes great interest in good government. Her father is a member of the Goo-Goo Club."

Constance laughed merrily. She had learned to laugh since she came back to New York.

"Why Ben, don't you see the girl is dead in love with Jim?"

"Nonsense, Con. I'm amazed at you. That shows how you women never do justice to each other's motives. Miss Van Ness said to me that women had no votes; that men were responsible for the bad government of the city, and that it needed a woman to make a strike for liberty; that the statue of liberty in the harbour is a woman."

"And you believed her?"

"Certainly. It *is* a woman. I've seen it."

"I'm not talking of the statue, but of Grace Van Ness. Do you imagine that any woman would threaten murder to reform a city? She was simply leading you on to do what she wanted done."

"Why, of course, Joan of Arc struck for the liberty of France, and she had no lover."

"How do you know? It would be just like the stupid men historians to omit that fact, thinking it trivial, not worth mentioning, whereas it would be the keynote of the whole affair."

"That's so. I hadn't thought of that."

"Does Jim visit her?"

"Who? Joan of Arc?"

"Ben, stop your fooling. I'm interested in those two, and I want you to help me."

"All right, Connie. I don't think he does visit her, but I'm not sure about it. Jim told me once he didn't care anything for her."

"Oh, that settles it. Had you asked him?"

"Yes; the day she was in the office."

Again Constance laughed till the tears came.

"Ben, you will write to Jim at once, and you must show me the letter before it is sent. Tell him that you were so busy you forgot to thank Miss Van Ness for all she had done during the crisis, so he must call on her immediately and convey the gratitude of the firm in the best language he can command. Jim is the most bashful, self-depreciating fellow on earth, but after delivering him into her hands, if she isn't clever enough to do the rest she deserves to lose him."

"Lose him! Jim's a good fellow, but the loss will be his rather than hers."

"That is a man's view. You write the letter."

Thus it came about that James Monro in the seclusion of his club strove to compose an epistle to a young lady because he had received a mandate from his chief, yet glad of the excuse, which, if McAllister thought valid, would be valid. Finally the note took this shape:

"Dear Miss Van Ness—

"I should like permission to call on you that I may convey the thanks of Mr. McAllister and myself for your great kindness during my recent illness and the crisis which threatened to overtake our firm. In a letter to me, Mr. McAllister says that but for your advice and encouragement he would not have had the heart to face the difficulties he encountered.

"On one occasion my own advice was not well received, but time has proven that I was entirely in the wrong. May I hope that you, who have been so successful where I failed, will be magnanimous and forgive?

"Yours gratefully,
"JAMES MONRO."

In prompt reply to this the young man received a dainty card, which he ever afterward treasured:

"DEAR MR. MONRO—

"I shall be delighted to have you come and take tea with me after the English fashion, at 4.30 to-morrow (Thursday). I shall bestow upon you tea and forgiveness in the same room as that in which your advice was so churlishly repelled by

"Your repentant friend,
"GRACE VAN NESS."

It will be seen from this that Mrs. McAllister was quite correct in her surmise that if one woman delivered the goods another could be trusted to take care of them—if she wanted them.

The cordial nature of the missive sent a thrill of happiness through the reader. That she should sign herself his friend gave promise of a dearer title, as he fondly hoped, a result to be achieved after long waiting on his part in the years to come, and much diplomacy during those years.

The room in the Van Ness house to which he was admitted seemed much the same as when he last (as he thought) visited it—the actual last visit was not real, but part of his dreams, more elusive even than the phantasy of delirium. But his hostess was not the cold beauty he had left enthroned there; she was now all vivacity and charm, sparkling and friendly, solicitous of his ease.

"Not that chair!" she cried, "this one. That is high-backed, wooden and colonial. I don't know whether to put it out of the room or leave it here. It fascinates me, *and* sometimes sends a little shiver through me."

He looked with interest at the discarded chair.

"You speak of it as if it came from a haunted house."

"Worse than that; it is haunted itself. A ghost sat in it, and now I see the ghost when it is not there. When I am alone in the dusk the chair startles me."

"Is there a story connected with it?"

"Oh, yes, though not a ghost story as you might suppose, but a love story. Do you like love stories, Mr. Monro?"

"I—I don't know. I haven't much time for reading."

"I'll tell you this one some day or rather some evening when the shadows gather, before the lights are lit, and if you do not at least pretend to be very much interested in this love story I'll never tell you another. To me it is the most absorbing story in the world."

"Oh, I shall be interested; you may be quite sure of that. Won't you let me hear it now?"

"No. It requires the twilight. And the night should be warm and still, with only the fountain tinkling."

"Then it must be told in this room?"

"Of course, and we need the presence of the chair."

"I don't care now whether the story is good or bad."

"Why?"

"Because I know I am to come here again."

"I hope so. How do you take your tea—cream and sugar?"

"If you please."

"I'll never need to ask that question again. I'll remember."

She laughed in a quiet way to see his growing embarrassment.

In truth the young man was confronted with a social problem which he could not solve. What is expected of a visitor who has discovered a glaring defect in the costume of a charming hostess? Should he call her attention to it and thus, perhaps, cover her with confusion, or should he remain silent and allow chagrin to be his follower?

Monro found himself in a quandary. Grace Van Ness was dressed exquisitely. She had evidently prepared

herself with thought and taste for his coming, but—but by some mischance her sleeve was torn, laying bare the white shoulder and part of the rounded arm, and here she was chatting and laughing, quite oblivious to the disaster. As she moved so gracefully about the room, this perfect shoulder occasionally gleamed at him, and he caught his breath like a votary who has a glimpse of the forbidden shrine. But a desperate courage came to him. If he spoke not now she might never permit him to set foot over her threshold again, so humiliated would she be when she discovered this disarray, knowing she had laughed and talked with him, he witnessing; whereas if he spoke at once and she took offence he was within the stronghold to beg forgiveness.

"O—Miss Van Ness—you will pardon me—but your dress is torn—there, at the shoulder."

She was standing, and when he spoke turned her head to look at the rent, her clear-cut exquisite profile etched against the window, reminding him in her attitude of a marble he had seen of a girl glancing thus at a butterfly that had alighted on her arm.

"So it is," she said brightly, without the slightest trace of embarrassment in her tone; he thanked his star for that, and breathed again. "Well, I think whoever did the damage should mend it; don't you?"

She was rose-tinted as she faced him bravely.

"It—it probably caught on some nail," he ventured.

"I see that I am bewildering you. That comes from my liking for the story I mentioned. But let us get down to practical things. Here is a pin. You see I cannot reach the rent. Will you oblige me?"

He rose and came to her, attempting the task set to him, his fingers trembling as they touched the firm shoulder.

"Be careful!" she warned him, as breathless as himself.

"Lord! I have need," he cried, whereat she whisked herself free and retreated, leaving him standing there, his *eyes aglow.* "You pretend not to know where responsi-

bility rests. Those hands so clumsy at repairs were swift to reduce me to rags."

He stared at her, unable to speak. Their positions in that room were now reversed, he thinking her demented, as on the previous occasion she had thought him.

"I put on this torn sleeve purposely. I wished to know—if you—if it brought any—reminiscence to your mind. Do you mean to say you do not remember that you came to me—to this room—when you were hurt?"

"I came here? Good God—came here—insane?"

"You were sane, it seemed to me."

"Into this room? Then—it was not all a dream?"

"Not unless—waking—you wish it so."

"Came to you! What—what did I say?"

"You said—Oh, what do you think you said?"

"If they battered me until but a remnant of thought remained, that remnant was filled with you. If my heart still throbbed, you owned every pulsebeat. If enough of life were left me to crawl to your feet and breathe but four words when I fell there, those words must have been, 'Grace, I love you.'"

"That's what you said—Jim."

Then he did exactly what he had done before; kissed her on the lips and on the bare rounded shoulder.

THE END.

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